MEETING YOUR CHILD'S PROBLEMS

MIRIAM FINN SCOTT

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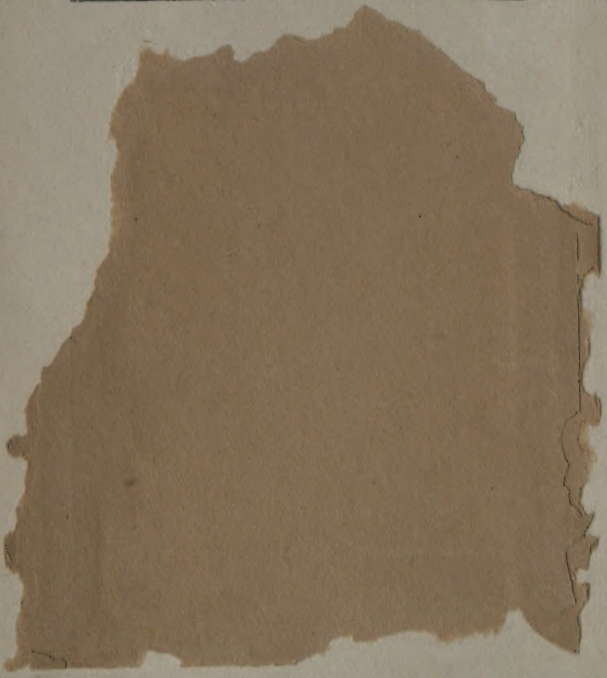

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MEETING YOUR CHILD'S PROBLEMS

By Miriam Finn Scott

How to Know Your Child

Meeting Your Child's Problems

MEETING YOUR CHILD'S PROBLEMS

BY

MIRIAM FINN SCOTT

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To
HELEN HILDA DAVID

PREFACE

To make the most of our children, — this is the instinctive desire of all normal modern parents. Unfortunately, however, few women or men have been trained for the high duties and privileges of parenthood and the mere event of the birth of a child does not automatically endow them with the ability and the knowledge to perform the parent functions. And so the instinctive desire remains too often a blind desire. To help give eyes to that desire, to help parents see the possibilities that lie in their children, to help them see how best to develop these possibilities is the purpose of this volume.

We who have grown old and wise enough to examine ourselves honestly will admit that we are far short of being what we might have been. The most has not been made of us. We might have been far more useful

to ourselves and to others, and far more happy. We are this fraction of our full potentiality largely because in our childhood we were not understood and guided aright. Some of our good qualities were allowed to go undeveloped, some of our weaknesses were allowed to grow uncurbed, because of the loving ignorance of our parents. And this same process of wasted humanity is continuing with the children of to-day.

It is perhaps now too late for us to make of ourselves the full one hundred per cent. of the persons we might have been, but it is not too late to attempt to do this with our children.

This book is no complete compendium, covering all cases and leaving nothing unsaid. Rather it tries to handle its subject by pointing out certain typical causes and conditions of error, of failure, of overlooked qualities, and by directing attention to certain rich possibilities that exist in the child and his ordinary surroundings; with the hope

that each parent who reads may be stimulated to examine his or her own home situation and discover its flaws and potentialities.

It may seem that much of the following pages deal with the commonplace. I wish to say in advance and with all the emphasis I have that this is intentional. In dealing with children nothing requires more attention, more careful examination, than the commonplace. First, the commonplaces are the possibilities for evil and good that we are most likely to overlook; they are so plainly before us that we cannot see them. The unusual instantly gains our notice and is given our attention. Second, my intensive work with children convinces me that the commonplaces, the most ordinary events of daily experience, the most insignificant details of our daily contacts, are the things that count most in children's lives; and it is the sum total of all these infinitesimal details that does most to build the structure, weave the texture, of human existence.

PREFACE

Readers who are acquainted with my earlier book, "How to Know Your Child," may find the ring of familiarity in the following pages. This similarity is admitted, for the present volume is in effect an extension of its predecessor; a great fundamental truth cannot be too often repeated and enlarged upon. New readers, to whom anything that follows may seem lacking in clarity or completeness, may perhaps gain fuller understanding by referring to the earlier volume.

MIRIAM FINN SCOTT.

The Children's Garden,
New York City.

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MEETING YOUR CHILD'S PROBLEMS

CHAPTER I

THE NORMAL HOME

THE world's most important task, its greatest problem, also its greatest blessing, will forever be the training and education of our children. Earnest efforts have been made, and are being made, to secure better schools, better teachers, better companionship, better playgrounds and more of them; but in all our efforts to handle the world's first problem we have overlooked or given minor consideration (at least most of us have) to what is the most promising medium for approaching this task, what is the very garden soil of the child's life, — and this is the child's own home.

It cannot be said too often or too emphatically that the first years of the child's life — roughly speaking, from birth to the age of six — *constitute the most important period of the child's whole existence.* It is during this period that the child covers a greater area of growth than during all the rest of his life combined; it is during this period that the child develops from a physically, spiritually and intellectually helpless embryonic being to an "individual," a "person" more or less in control of his fundamental faculties; it is during this period that the child's instincts begin to reach out, when his habits are established, when he is most impressionable, most formative and most imitative; and since it is during this period that he spends practically all his time in the home, or under its direct influence, it logically follows that we must seek to make the home the most normal and potent factor in the child's existence.

Now our common ideal of the home is a place where we may be comfortable, and our

children may be healthy and comfortable and happy with us. This is almost as high as the average conception of the home ever reaches, but this falls far short of what should be the true ideal of the home. Since the continuation of the human race and the highest possible development of our children are the supreme functions of mankind, then the highest conception of the home is of a place where first thought and first consideration are given to what will best influence the child. This we must accept as the fundamental ideal of the normal home. All other details which go to make up the average picture of a delightful home must be regarded as distinctly secondary to this basic proposition.

The fundamental consideration, then, for thinking parents must be to make the home normal. What constitutes such a home, we may rightfully ask. My answer would be that more important than any material elements is the *right attitude* on the parents' part toward the child's needs, and a mental and physical perseverance in maintaining

that attitude and carrying out its dictates. All else is built upon that attitude, or derives its suggestion and inspiration from it.

More concretely, the normal home is an orderly, well-organized, peaceful, harmonious center whose activities and atmosphere automatically influence the little child to use his energies constructively; a center where his individuality is respected and given a chance for expression, where he himself is respected and has serious consideration. In the normal home the attitude that "anything is good enough for children" will not exist. In the normal home the little child will have space to move about; he will learn much by finding out for himself how to do things, and will not be hampered by constant direction; he will be given sufficient time in which to carry out his ideas, and he will no more be thoughtlessly and abruptly pulled away from his activities than will the adult be thoughtlessly disturbed. In the normal home the attitude towards the child will be that of enlisting the child's interest and coöperation,

taking it for granted that the child is willing to coöperate. In the normal home the child will have privacy, variety; all children will be treated with fairness; the clever ones will not be held up as examples to those less clever or perhaps differently gifted. In the normal home the physical care of the children will be observed with regularity and simplicity; and, above all, in the normal home the mother and father will coöperate sympathetically in the training of the children; they will be humble in spirit, patient and thoughtful, and they will be willing to stand aside and learn from the child.

But before the mother can intelligently attempt to make her home a better place for her children she must first diagnose it as it now is and discover for herself what are its existing faults. Perhaps in our thoughtlessness, our blindness to the great value of this early period in the child's life, and of the surpassing potential usefulness of the home in the development of the child during these early years, we may have been guilty

of many shortcomings, and even of great mistakes. The pointing out of some of these typical mistakes, these typical failures to take advantage of great existing opportunities, may perhaps serve as well as anything else to open our eyes not only to our failures but to the vast and rich possibilities for the child's development that exist in a normal home.

This discovery, both of our mistakes and our opportunities, may perhaps best be achieved by each of us putting to ourself searching questions and by giving ourself honest answers. Is our home founded upon some wrong ideal, or is the emphasis placed upon what, comparatively speaking, should be a secondary reason for the home's existence? For instance, have we allowed our pride as housekeepers — the desire that everything always be spotless and always in its place — to become a ruling passion, with the result that the children seem always being haled before the household court on the charge of disorderly conduct? Have we

let the idea of furnishings, for the mere sake of furnishings, develop a disproportionate importance? Have we permitted the comfort, the peace and quiet of the adults to become the major motive of the home, and allowed ourselves to give secondary consideration to the comfort and equipment of the children? When we are really desirous of doing something which will please our children, do we act primarily from our own point of view of what we think the child *should* like, or do we take into consideration what may be the child's natural and wholesome preference; do we consider the child's mental and nervous make-up? Has hospitality become the dominant aim and purpose of the home — the very generous idea that our home is our friends' home, and that they must at all times be welcome, and that our home must at all times be ready to receive them — or the calculating idea that hospitality may be used as an instrument to forward our business or social ambitions?

I do not mean to disparage friendship, or

underrate the fine qualities of true hospitality; but where hospitality is overvalued and overpracticed, it follows almost necessarily that time and strength and thought are given to social affairs which should be given to the children, and that the children are, so to say, banished for the time being to inferior places in our minds and in our households. Further, the bustle and strain that usually accompany a too great hospitality naturally react upon the children; inevitably their temper, their proper feeding, their sleep are disturbed.

Thus we might indefinitely continue our diagnoses, putting to ourselves numberless other searching questions about our households. Our mistakes and our thoughtlessness made clear to us by this self-analysis, we can then proceed, with a reasonable degree of reassurance that we are following the proper course, to form our constructive plan for reshaping our homes.

Naturally my constructive suggestions cannot begin to cover the subject; for the

shortcomings revealed by such self-diagnosis will vary in some measure in every home and will be too numerous for me to hope to treat in full. The most that I can expect to do is to handle briefly a few typical conditions, and then leave it to the initiative and good sense of the earnest mother to work out the other problems involved in reconstructing her home to suit the needs of her children.

First of all, I would say that the home cannot possibly be a normal home unless the mother herself is a normal being; and right here is required some careful thinking on the mother's part in regard to her duties, her health, her state of mind. The mother, to have the spiritual strength, the physical endurance, the patience, the self-control and poise to maintain the right attitude towards her child, must realize that she cannot afford to waste any of herself or of her time on non-essentials. She must learn to discriminate between the essentials and non-essentials in life. She must give the best of herself to the important things and she must

learn either to eliminate or subordinate the non-important. On the one hand she must guard against becoming the type of a mother who is hopelessly buried beneath the infinitesimal details of the home; on the other hand she must remember not to overlook certain other details, which, though they may seem insignificant, yet play a very important part in the development and training of the child. Irreparable harm is often done to the little one, where the mother leaves the handling of the daily details of its care to an outsider who perhaps is conscientious enough, but is not capable of bringing the right spirit into her work and so makes many of the everyday experiences agony to the little child, whereas the same details could be made both a source of pleasure and a means of training.

The mother, to have the home normal for her child, must clearly perceive and accept the obligations and problems which maternity has placed upon her. A large percentage of the mothers whom the training of

their children keeps in a state of hysteria and physical collapse are mothers who either are not willing or not capable of recognizing that motherhood is the most responsible and exacting work in the world; that one cannot fulfill its obligations and also have time and strength to satisfy all one's personal desires and ambitions. We must frankly admit that motherhood implies sacrifices, — yes, the giving up of numberless pleasant experiences, the giving up of leisure and of many personal comforts. But motherhood also means the gaining of infinitely greater and deeper joys and of finding the richer meaning to life.

Right here, perhaps, I should point out the absolute necessity of the business organization of the home — whether that home be a small apartment or a house with scores of rooms — if the mother herself is to be normal and is to surround her child with normal influences. Few things are more demoralizing in the child's life, and few other elements are more responsible for his problems, than

disorganization in the household. And yet there is nothing that can have a more wholesome and more vital influence upon the child than a thoroughly organized household, in which affairs move forward without disturbance, in which there is due consideration for the rights of all persons. The very atmosphere of such a household will help the child to acquire the power of concentration, will instil in him the sense of responsibility, a sense of order, a sense of the value of time; and it will simulate in him a desire to work and an ambition to get results from his efforts. How to organize the business side of a home is outside the province of this volume; the earnest mother can secure this knowledge elsewhere; but in writing of the normal home I must necessarily emphasize the vital relationship between efficient household management and the training of the child.

The home, to be normal in the highest sense and to be of most value in its influence on the child, must possess harmony: har-

mony of furnishings, harmony in the matter of coöperative work, harmony in the general spirit of the household. The furnishings should be simple and in good taste; but however rich and valuable, they should not be set above the interests of the child, though certainly the child should be taught to give proper care to the furnishings of the home. If the rooms are crowded with useless furniture and decorations, for which a too high regard may be held, the child will seem always to be disturbing and upsetting things. As a matter of fact, the things are in the way and not the child. Many problems with the child which are a source of worry to the parent can be traced back to this matter of the overcrowded home. We must remember that the child's movements are naturally very free and very quick. Even the child who is carefully trained to use his body, who is unusually thoughtful, cannot control his growing strength; and in his free, unconscious movements he frequently upsets and damages objects which are crowding all about

him. The damage done, if a disproportionate emphasis has been placed upon the furniture, usually is very provoking to the mother, and the mother often allows her irritation to get the better of her and she takes it out upon the child. The remedy here is not to correct the child, but to correct the furniture and our own ideas of its relative importance.

Harmony of spirit, which means the kindly coöperation of all individuals and all elements in the household, is even more important in the making of a normal home. Hardly anything is more disastrous to the little child than continuous wrangling and disputing among adults in the household. A child brought up in an atmosphere of such confusion cannot be expected to have self-control, poise, thoughtfulness and consideration for others. On the other hand establish your household on the principles that here every one's rights shall be respected, that no one shall be taken advantage of, that courtesy and kindness shall be the common

practice, that arbitrary commands and demands shall be unknown and that work shall have respect and appreciation; and in such an atmosphere of harmony and coöperation your child will acquire, as naturally as he eats and breathes and grows, the finer habits of life which all wise parents wish their children to possess.

The mother, striving to make the home normal, must not overlook the possibilities that lie in giving the child a share in the home's everyday activities: the possibilities of instilling in the child from the beginning the fundamental idea that the peace and happiness and progress of all, a normal life for all, depend upon all doing their share of the work. The child can be stimulated from his earliest years to coöperate in maintaining the harmony and physical comfort of the household, even if he helps with apparently the most insignificant things. There are innumerable small and light duties which the very young child could be asked to undertake or to share. Care must be taken to enlist the

child's assistance in the right spirit; his coöperation must be treated with seriousness and with respect, and his duties must be increased as his mind and physical powers increase. These duties will help develop in the child a habit of self-dependence, a growing sense of responsibility for the home, and an appreciation of the services rendered him by others.

The case of Lucy will suggest how the activities of the home can be used to help make the home normal and the child a better balanced individual. For years she had a very faithful companion who, as a matter of course, did all the physical things for her, and Lucy grew up to accept all these many services as naturally as she breathed the air. The little girl almost unconsciously developed the habit of exacting from her companion any service that popped into her mind at almost any hour of the day. One morning Lucy demanded that her companion hand her a pair of socks on a chair close beside the bed on which Lucy was sitting. The com-

panion, busy at something else, suggested that Lucy help herself this time. This refusal infuriated Lucy and she insisted that the socks be handed her and at once, and as her companion did not make an instantaneous response, the child in her wild fury pounced upon her, pinched, kicked and was almost ready to bite her, when the mother happened upon the scene.

This situation made clear to the mother that her child had been living in abnormal circumstances; that her little girl was in danger of becoming an utterly selfish, autocratic tyrant. The mother was quick to realize that there was just one way of saving the little child from a tragedy, — this was to break at once the relations between the little girl and her companion. This was done, and from that moment on Lucy was put upon her own responsibility to take care, as far as possible, of herself and her own belongings, even though this meant for her to go without some things and to have other things done in a way not quite so finished. This change was

a shock to Lucy, yet it was stimulating to the best powers in her. In less than two weeks Lucy proved that she was capable of taking care of herself; it counted for much that she realized that her own pleasures and comforts depended on herself. To-day Lucy takes pride and pleasure in doing her work, and she has learned from actual experience to love and respect work and to respect those who do it.

The normal home must have a definite place that the child can call his own, where he can be comfortable, where he can play and work at ease, where things will be accessible to him, where he can freely exercise his faculties within their limitations. This definite place in the home may be either a large room, fully equipped, or it may be merely one corner in a room with a few low shelves on which his own toys and working materials are kept, and with a little table and a chair that fit his body; but whatever the place may be, it must be *his own,* it must be respected, it must not be disturbed, and we must

realize that this place is the little child's serious world, just as the parts of the house especially our own are serious to us.

The normal home must have in this definite space what is, for your individual child, a normal equipment; and this means, as I must necessarily continue to repeat, that you must first study your child, learn its interests and provide materials accordingly. None of us would recognize as a normal kitchen one where a toasting fork is used for frying eggs. Too often implements about as appropriate are in our ignorance supplied our children, and though we would not expect a perfectly cooked egg, we do expect a perfectly developed child. The chief points about a child's possessions (after the point that they should be chosen with regard to his character) are that they must be few; that the games and material must be significant to the child; that they must be within the limit of his understanding and within his physical power to handle; that they must be interesting and simple enough so that they

really stimulate a desire in him to work and play with them; and that the things must be as perfectly and as beautifully made as is within the parents' means. Perishable and destructible materials are a bad influence and are responsible for much carelessness and disregard for property in the little child; for example, the child accustomed to badly made toy furniture which he can smash with no great loss to any one is very likely to treat the good furniture of the household in the same manner.

Even the most earnest of parents often do not recognize the vital bearing of these matters in the making of their homes. A mother came to call on me with her little boy just before placing him under the care of a nerve specialist as she had decided to do. She told me that Michael was in frightful condition, he was so nervous. He would pay no attention to his kindergarten teacher, he would quarrel with his brother, he would not do a single thing that either of his parents asked of him, he had no interest in his games or

toys, — in fact, he was often viciously destructive of them. She was certain that there was something fundamentally wrong with his nerves and that doubtless something very radical would have to be done to have him put in good condition.

Michael had been threatened so frequently to be taken some place if he did not behave better that on the day of his visit to me he was beside himself, and his mother was fearful that a distressing scene would take place. The little boy was very suspicious at first of the absolute quiet and peace of my house; but when he entered the play-room, which is especially arranged for the purpose of observing children, and where every detail has been worked out with the utmost care to make a direct appeal to the child, the little boy soon lost his mixture of timidity and obstinacy and began to examine the things which were accessible to him. In less than ten minutes he was busy taking apart a set of nested eggs, which he did with remarkable skill for a boy as young as he was. There

were eighteen eggs in that nest; some of them were very small and very difficult to handle unless one had perfect control of the fingers. Michael was in the room for a period of an hour and a half, busy every moment with work that he chose for himself; he finished every task before starting on the next; and he would have continued busy much longer had it not come time for him to go home.

The mother was frankly amazed at the response I had from Michael in the playroom. I questioned her about her home and Michael's place in it, and the problem of the boy immediately became clear. Here was Michael, charged with energy, with natural ability to do things, and with a mind capable of concentration and order. But his home, though roomy enough, was cluttered up with all kinds of furnishings. He had numberless things piled on top of each other, scattered in various parts of the house. The atmosphere about him was, as far as he was concerned, chaos. My recommendation to

the mother was that no specialist was needed to settle Michael's nerves. What was necessary was a general organization of the household, a weeding out of the numberless useless, cumbersome objects which made life a nightmare for little Michael, and the setting apart of a place that should be Michael's own, where he would find materials accessible, and peace to use them.

Naturally, in what I have here written, I have had to emphasize the child, and the building of the home about the child. But this does not imply the banishment of the parents from the home or any lessening of their comforts; as a matter of fact, in a normal home, since the children are adequately cared for, there should be an increase in the real comfort and relief of the parents. Home is the place for all; and its potentialities as a place of happiness for all increase in proportion as we strive to make the home a garden wherein our children can have their richest growth.

CHAPTER II

THE MAGIC CHILD

IN the ledgers of our hearts the debit columns are frequently written full and black with our children's indebtedness to us: to us, overworked, self-sacrificing, loving and devoted parents. The ledger shows to our eyes that we have given to our children our all; and the only returns we can see upon our investment of love and devotion are rebelliousness, selfishness, disobedience, bad manners, perhaps stupidity, — items which make us feel that we have spent our all to no purpose. In our frantic depression we feel that we have failed, and we despairingly ask ourselves why, when we have given all we had to give, should we fail?

There may be many answers, or component elements of the full answer, to this despairing question of our hearts. But I am

here going to deal chiefly with one answer. We fail (that is, when we really try — I am here not including the mother who does not try — to give adequate attention to her children) because we expect too quick results, because we are too impatient for the child's development. We want immediate profits from our investment. We fail because we plant a rose cutting at night, and the next morning look with eager expectancy for a rosebush in full bloom. We fail because we try to implant excellent precepts, and from them we expect immediately to spring a magically perfect child. Unfortunately (or fortunately) we are not living in a pleasant fairy world where golden wishes are immediately golden accomplishments; we are living in the very practical world of everyday homes, and in this complicated, tedious and often slow-moving world no such creature as the magic child exists.

Perhaps nothing is more responsible for this sense of failure than our not recognizing and understanding the nature and point

of view of our child; this coupled with our expectation that our child should live up to some standard of behavior that seems to us natural and proper. The little incident I am about to tell represents an extreme case, but it nevertheless is suggestive of a very common attitude toward our children. To celebrate grandfather's and grandmother's arrival, Jimmie's parents had invited the five-year-old Jimmie to the Sunday midday dinner. It was rather an elaborate occasion, and this was Jimmie's debut at a regular family dinner. Now all his life Jimmie had played among domestic animals and had a real affection for them; whenever a bit of meat had been served him, it was merely a fragment which had significance to him only as it tasted good or bad; it had no other connection. At this dinner two whole fowls were set before the father; and when the long carving knife began to dismember them, Jimmie, who had never before witnessed such a performance, called in agony:

"Father, stop cutting up the chickens, it hurts them!"

The mother and father laughingly tried to subdue the child, telling him to keep quiet, not to be naughty. But to Jimmie this was no laughing matter. It was unbelievable tragedy. He protested again and again about the carving, and when the carving was finished, he most definitely announced that he would not eat any of that chicken. No serious attention was paid to Jimmie's protestations, and in his turn he was served with the chicken. When the plate was put before him, Jimmie with both hands pushed it away from him, nauseated and sick with grief.

To the parents, however, this was merely wilful misconduct beyond all endurance. The father rose from the table and in what to him was just wrath carried the little boy upstairs. I must leave to my reader's imagination the scene behind the closed doors of Jimmie's room. For long after were heard the shrieks and sobs of the little boy, and the beating of his feet against the locked door.

Jimmie was deprived of his dinner; he was disgraced and humiliated before his grandparents. And worse than all, whether his parents knew it at the time, or whether Jimmie recognized it, the first seed of rebellion against his father was planted within the child's sensitive soul for this unjust treatment; and perhaps this was the beginning of Jimmie's lack of confidence in and respect for his father's judgment and wishes.

These parents had a sense of failure in regard to Jimmie, which would not have come depressingly upon them if only their attitude toward the boy had been one of appreciation of his fine nature, his fine sensitiveness; if only there had been an enlightened desire on their part to relieve the child's suffering. This might have been accomplished either by suggesting that Jimmie leave the table if he wished while the fowl was being carved, or at least by excusing him from eating it. But instead, not really understanding the boy, and swayed by their own ideas of how a good child should behave, a course was taken

which was equivalent to writing heavy and distressing debit scores against Jimmie in the family ledger.

Another method which leads to seeming failure because of our inclination to believe that our efforts should have produced a more nearly perfect child, is our practice of exacting definite promises from our children to do certain things, or to conform to certain standards of conduct which are beyond their powers or which are contrary to the essence of their characters. Here again we apparently fail because we demand too much. Inseparable from this practice is the irony of visiting compound disaster upon our children. First we expect the impossible from them, and when they naturally fail us, we punish them for their lack of interest or effort.

" Irma has promised me again and again not to hit, pinch or kick her governess when she gets angry," a mother despairingly reported to me. " We have tied Irma's hands; we have deprived her of her food; we have

even pinched her back to show her how it feels. But nothing seems to make any impression upon Irma. She seems simply to have been born cruel, and she is growing worse all the time. And her promises — her promises seem to mean nothing at all!"

In the course of events I made a study of Irma, and necessarily also of the mother. The mother was undoubtedly most earnestly concerned about Irma's cruel conduct and was most seriously trying to correct it; but I soon learned that unfortunately she had been trying to solve her problem with the wrong sort of earnestness. I found Irma to be a child of extraordinary strengths, mental, physical, emotional, — particularly emotional. They were far above the average for a child of her age, and out of all proportion to the mediums afforded to the child for their exercise and expression. Irma's emotions were more powerful than her power to control them. And this was as true of Irma in a happy mood as it was in a temper. Irma was as extravagant and vio-

lent in her kisses and in her caresses, when in a state of exuberance, as she was brutal and ungovernable with her kicks and pinches when in a fit of anger.

Here was plainly a case where the child had to be helped to gain control of her strengths, and where the child in her then condition could no more be held responsible for the painful outbursts of her powers than for the color of her eyes. The only remedy in such cases as Irma's is not through exacted promises and promptly executed penalties; it is through a true appreciation of the child's nature and a handling based upon such an understanding. The first important step toward helping Irma gain control of her powers was to afford her legitimate outlets for their use. I recommended for her vigorous activity in the open, — skating, bicycling, jumping the rope, playing ball, dancing, swimming and similar activities, these to give wholesome relief and developing exercise to her boundless physical energies. All such activities that used up her

physical strength and emotions in constructive, pleasure-giving experiences left the less to be wasted in destructive explosions, — in kicking, pinching, striking back, screaming and crying. I further suggested that Irma be afforded opportunities to hear good music, to see pictures, to make occasional visits to places of interest, to have, wherever possible, variety introduced into her life, and these opportunities to be afforded her naturally, without overstraining her: these last suggestions all were aimed to secure for her the wholesome satisfaction of the demands of her exceptionally emotional nature.

Here I wish most emphatically to state that nothing in connection with the development of the child's nature is more tragically ignored and neglected — a neglect leading later on to most serious troubles — than the emotional demands of the small child. The child's emotional cravings are to the child as deep, as serious, as cardinal a part of him as they are of us adults. The chief difference is that we can express all shades of our

emotions through our command of language. Further we have learned through experience, if we are wise, how to control and make use of our emotions; which knowledge experience has not yet had time to give the child. The child has only the two elemental mediums of expression, the laugh and the cry. We know in a general way when our children are in agony and when they are in ecstasy, but between these two extremes we know little of their mysterious soul-desires and soul-impulses. And yet right there, in this great in-between, may be longings, hopes, aspirations, a world of feelings that are often too big and deep for tears and laughter. Yet of these emotions in the child we take little account; frequently we are automatically and brutally thoughtless of them and their vast potentialities.

To go back to Irma — and what I recommended here in the treatment of Irma holds equally good in any case of a similar character — I particularly asked that Irma's explosions should be met with great kindness

and great patience. I asked that she be helped almost in a physical way to find herself; sometimes it would be best to leave her to herself in her temper, saying, "I am going to leave you alone, Irma. I know you will feel better in a few minutes." As a rule, when the cause or target of anger is removed, the anger is likely to subside. I suggested that at another time it might help to quiet the child by taking hold of her hands. "Irma, let us count together — one, two, three." Any other simple, quiet physical diversion might serve to take off the edge of the child's intensity. In such high-strung moments one must be careful not to make fun, not to ridicule. Fun or laughter only cause the child greater irritation at such a time and stimulate further loss of control. I suggested to Irma's mother that, soon after a bitter experience, when the child was quiet and again in a good humor, she should frankly and simply talk over with Irma her lack of self-control and suggest to her simple, concrete ways of checking herself

when next a furious impulse drove her to explode.

A child of such a vital, emotional nature is usually very intelligent, and with sympathetic treatment of the sort I suggested the child will invariably respond. She will at least try to make an effort to control herself. And we must be very quick to recognize that effort, and however slight the child's success, we must take serious notice of it, praise it. Only a coöperative, hopeful attitude will give strength, faith and courage to the child and will in the end bring the desired results. But it must be remembered that the molding of such a nature as Irma's means time and patience, even more time and more patience than the molding of the average child, and we must recognize that the thoughtful training of any child is a stupendous task. Here is almost the supreme sort of case where, if we expect magic, we are lost indeed, and the child is lost also.

Perhaps one of the most unreasonable demands we make upon our children, and inci-

dentally upon ourselves, is to expect complete and permanent changes to take place almost immediately upon our discovering our mistakes with our children and our application of a new method in handling them: to expect, which would indeed be magic, that a few weeks or a few months of thoughtful training will undo what six or eight years of thoughtless, blundering care has perverted and twisted in the child. The case of John, a boy of eight, whose habits of mind and spirit were almost completely disorganized, with a resulting sapping of his physical strength, will illustrate on the one hand how unreasonable we are to expect great improvement to take place suddenly; on the other hand, how encouraged and well-rewarded we may be, and how hopeful the most discouraging problem with a child can become, if sufficient time for the reconstruction of his habits is allowed.

When John first came to my attention he was a restless, listless little boy, with no sense of responsibility, no definite desire or

interest in anything, but none the less thoroughly selfish, self-centered, and self-conscious. For several months, without the child being conscious of it, I personally directed John's training and education at his home through the routine of his daily life, in which the boy's comforts and pleasures and interests depended to a reasonable extent upon himself. He learned, for instance, that unless he was up at a certain hour and dressed in time, a fair period being allowed for his dressing, he missed his breakfast; that unless he saw to the drying of his bathing suit (the early part of this experiment with the child was carried on during the summer) he lost his chance to go in swimming. Through the daily repetition of such experiences so closely connected with actual living, John began to grasp that he had certain responsibilities in life, that there were other people besides himself that had a right to be considered, that it was not pleasant to be left out of things. It must be said that it took many, many weeks before these new

ideas began to penetrate and affect his sluggish, disordered nature. Indeed, for awhile it seemed hopeless; but after persistent, patient repetition of these concrete demands upon him, at the same time taking care not to make the demands too heavy — it being realized that his weakened senses and faculties could not stand too great a strain — John finally began to respond, and his habits gradually and slowly began to reshape themselves.

After several months of this kind of training at home, the boy was placed in an excellent school, and sympathetic coöperation was enlisted from the teacher whose class he entered. For a period of four weeks things here went very smoothly with John. In fact, his response in the classroom was almost faultless. The teacher could not quite see that John needed any particular attention. He behaved well, he responded to his work, he obeyed directions promptly.

Then one day John returned from school looking glum, his eyes blank, his jaws sag-

ging. Having studied the child for several months, knowing his reactions, I realized what had happened. The novelty of the new experience at school had worn off; the old habit in John, his lack of continued interest in any one thing, had asserted itself. I realized that school was no longer heaven for him, and I was pretty certain that he was making it a rather uncomfortable place for the other children and his teacher. Anticipating the teacher's predicament, I at once wrote to her.

My note arrived at the psychological moment. The teacher came to see me to talk matters over. She was almost in despair about John. She told me that another day with him, such as she had endured during the last five or six days, would completely break her health and wreck the organization and spirit of her class. She asked me to have John taken out of her class. He was impossible, she claimed. He paid no attention to the work, or to her requests; he annoyed the children about him. The teacher's com-

plaints were serious, and on the surface her demand for the removal of the boy seemed logical and only just to the other children. John, who for only a comparatively brief period had been helped to get hold of himself and his powers, had had a natural relapse, — an incident to have been expected and accepted as a natural phenomenon in his stage of development. What John needed was a new stimulus to reawaken his interest in the school.

After considerable discussion the teacher was persuaded to give the lad another trial. The time was just before Thanksgiving, on which day John's class was to give a little play in which every member was to take part. That play was the one activity which held the child's interest. This I knew. I had a very frank talk with John. I told him that, from his behavior, I judged he was no longer interested in his work in the school; that if that were so, he need no longer attend school; that at any rate he was not to go to school for three days. During the three days that

followed John could not find a place for himself. He was lonely, he missed the companionship of his schoolmates and the incidental fun; and then his part in that Thanksgiving play was calling him. On the third day he voluntarily asked to be permitted to go to school again. The chance was given him, not with the negative admonition that if he didn't behave he would again be taken out, but with positive encouragement. I told him I took it for granted that he was going to like school better and that he was going to try to do better work.

It is now two months since John was returned to school, and while there have been many ups and downs, the boy has thus far never reached that low point of interest and high point of distraction which made him once an undesirable member of the class. His home conditions, which automatically demand constructive, thoughtful responses, help him constantly to gain strength. He is making splendid progress at present; he is working and playing with pleasure and

interest, and it is only fair to say that the teacher, who has realized the logic of my treatment of John, is doing her share by her hopeful attitude towards the child in helping to develop him to be the best that it is in him to be.

I certainly do not consider John's problem settled. I expect repetitions of his relapses. John will need most faithful care and most thoughtful guidance for many years. But this I also know; that gradually as his new constructive habits of concentration, of self-dependence, of self-control take firmer root in him, the old habits will become weaker, until in time the new habits will entirely replace the old ones. It is just a question of time.

Some of us, in our earnest desire to achieve the miracle of the perfect child, work towards that end by correcting every little mistake and imperfection. Hardly any course could be more injurious to the best development of the little child. The boy or girl whose every act is noticed and com-

mented on; who is always reminded to say "Thank you" and "Excuse me"; of whom it is always required to greet people, whether he is interested in them or not; the little child who is reprimanded and admonished for every slight slip and called "naughty" for every little selfish and childish act, — that little child is so confused with the many demands upon him that the words can make absolutely no impression upon his mind. The multitude of meaningless words wear down the child's nervous system; out of sheer exhaustion, there are violent nervous reactions.

There are few more important rules to remember in connection with the training of children than to *ignore ninety-nine per cent of their mistakes;* to notice only the significant points, only those of the child's bad manners or bad habits that actually spell destruction, that mean a serious injury either to the child himself, to other children or to valuable property. One important point noticed at the right time, corrected in as few words

as possible — the corrective statement made simply, definitely, and to the point, and if necessary repeated in exactly the same words, so that there will be no doubt in the child's mind as to the meaning of those words — one point so corrected will be more fruitful of good results than the most devoted attempt to watch over all faults every day.

A mother brought to me her three-year-old boy — an only child who had been brought up alone — with the despairing statement that he was selfish, thoughtless, cruel, plus a few other faults. "I do not know what can have got into Carl!" she exclaimed. "I did not know one child could have so many faults! Especially," she added, "when I try in every way not to let a single fault pass unnoticed!"

Her last sentence threw of course a clear light upon the whole situation; and the situation was further made plain by the mother's attitude towards the child in my play-room, where the child is allowed perfect freedom

to work and play with the various materials and toys. "Carl, have you seen this nest of eggs?" "Carl, don't lift that, you will drop it!" "Carl, do you see that little barrel underneath the table?" "Carl, here is a game just like yours." Briefly, the mother did not give Carl one minute's peace in which to look about or do things in his own way.

However, I did manage to make a study of Carl. He was, by native endowments, a child of powerful individuality, of good mentality, of great will power, of solid physique, and was naturally affectionate; but all these good powers were sadly distorted, his whole being was a chaos in which selfishness dominated. This was not at all surprising, considering that he probably all his life lived in the bewilderment of his mother's constant demands.

Before the visit ended I called in to play with Carl a little girl who has had very thoughtful care and direction, and who has had an opportunity to learn to respect the wishes and rights of others. Within a few

minutes Carl wanted everything that the little girl had; he pulled things out of her hands if she did not give them up instantly upon his demand; he pushed her and pulled at her. The mother, seeing this, told me of her further trials and embarrassments over the boy; how, when she took him out in the park, he wanted everybody else's toys but would not for one instant let any one use any of his.

The mother's problem, though she had created it herself, was a serious one. Carl was no simple matter to handle. Indeed, there were many weeds in his garden to be cleaned away before one could see and enjoy the beauty of his growth; but it was evident that all the weeds could not be pulled at once without causing too much irritation, too much disturbance. Carl's faults had to be weeded out and corrected one at a time, and right there in the play-room I gave the mother a concrete lesson how to go about it.

Towards the end of the visit the little girl picked up a raffia ball to play with. Instantly

Carl was upon her, trying to snatch the ball out of the little girl's hands, and with his superior physical strength he succeeded.

" Carl, please give that ball to Jennie. It is her turn to play with it," I very calmly but very definitely told Carl.

" I won't," he replied.

" Carl, please give that ball to Jennie," I repeated.

Carl was immovable; he put the ball behind him and closed his two hands upon it.

" Carl, please give that ball to Jennie."

Carl held on to it tighter than ever. " I won't," he said, and began to run away from me with it.

" I am sorry, Carl, but I must *take* the ball away from *you* to give to Jennie," and saying that, without hurting the child, I got hold of his hands very firmly and managed to take the ball out of them, saying, " When Jennie is through with the ball, then you can play with it."

Carl was outraged; he burst into tears. The little girl went off to one corner of the

room to play with the ball. Carl was left alone to have it out with himself. After a few minutes of very violent crying, realizing that no one was paying any attention to him — I took great care to divert the mother's attention for that particular time — he quieted down and began to look around for something else with which to play. Within a reasonable time (one must be careful not to allow too long a period to elapse, as the point at issue must not become dim in the child's memory), I said to Jennie, "Now, Jennie, will you please give the ball to Carl." Jennie, having learned the lesson of giving up graciously, as a matter of course handed over the ball to Carl. I consciously praised Jennie's graciousness, and right on top of this praise I asked Carl if he would not give Jennie the fire engine with which he was at that time playing. And Carl, with great hesitation, as if the meaning of what I asked was coming very slowly to his senses, handed the toy engine over to Jennie. I was very quick to show my appreciation of his re-

sponse, and I took care to say it plainly enough for Carl to understand.

It was obvious that an unselfish spirit in his relations with others could be developed in Carl, and that his other bad traits could be replaced with good ones. My first and most important recommendation in this case — as the reader may have guessed, from what I have said previously — was for the mother to learn to restrain herself in her correction of Carl; for her to learn to seem to ignore, for the present, most of Carl's collection of faults, to notice only one at a time and to correct that one at the right moment in the simplest, quietest way possible, and to learn not to expect immediate results.

Once again let me say that the only magic we can count upon to make over our children is a combination of understanding, hard work, patience and then more patience, — and a willingness to wait and keep on waiting. It is hard and slow and seemingly commonplace, but it can work miracles. And no other magic can do so much.

CHAPTER III

THE CHILD WHO LAGS BEHIND

THE child who for some reason, and in some particular, lags behind the average of his age, — I think that few of us have the faintest idea of how general is this problem. Those of us who have children that are two or three classes behind where they should be in school may admit that our children are backward. But if we really saw the whole truth, and realized the possibilities that exist in the child, every one of us who has children would admit that our children are backward in some respect. That is, our child is not developing to the limits of his possibilities. Therefore the problem of the child who lags behind is a problem that touches every parent.

Now the child who lags behind, who is not developed to a full one hundred per cent

of his possibilities, may in some instances be fitted by the word "stupid" which we in our provocation so generally apply to such cases. But as a common thing, the child lags behind not because he is stupid, but because he has never been understood, and therefore has never been properly handled. And in many a case our improper handling has made us the direct agents and causes of the child's being below par.

In addition to the distressing deficiencies that involuntarily rise in our mind when we think of "backward" or "defective" children, there are other qualities (or the lack of them) that should receive our serious attention. These are traits which we have come to accept as human weaknesses because such qualities are so common that we regard them as natural and unavoidable, and so most of us have never concerned ourselves greatly about them, — such traits as bashfulness, purposelessness, lack of self-confidence and self-dependence, lack of initiative, lack of power of expression. Yet all per-

sons having these traits, whether children or grown-ups, are lagging behind what they might be or might have been. They are losing much out of life which they should have, and they are giving far less to life than they should give. And in almost every case some one, consciously or unconsciously, is at fault.

Perhaps a child lags behind because of ignorance or neglect on the parents' part, and perhaps the defect they finally see is only the surface indication of something deeper and very different. It was the defective speech of a child which brought one young mother to me, a woman plainly well off in worldly goods, but as plainly having little knowledge of children. "I have a girl a year and a half old who talks very well, and a boy four years old who doesn't talk nearly so well," she informed me. "I can't tell you how distressed I am about Harry — how disgraced I feel. I simply can't understand!" And then she broke down and sobbed: "His father thinks Harry is half-witted."

I saw Harry. As his frightened mother

had said, he could talk but little better than a child that has just begun to babble. But his inability to speak was not his only defect. Though well developed physically, he had little control over his body. He had no muscular coördination, no power of concentration. Except for his physique, his development was that of a child of a year and a half. There was good superficial reason for his father believing that the boy was half-witted.

And yet it was quickly apparent that Harry was not by birth deficient in brains. Here was an extreme example of how ignorance of child nature and its necessities may hold a child upon the backward path. The child had had plenty of food, originally of good quality, but food not suited to his age and badly cooked at that. But beyond giving the child its fill of this kind of food, nothing constructive had been done for him, though the mother loved him deeply. In order not to have the child meet with an accident (though his childhood was spent in the country) Harry was always kept indoors,

without companionship and without play materials. He was allowed to shift absolutely for himself. The mother never played with the child, never told or read him a story, or explained pictures to him; nor did she ever talk to him in a simple, intelligent way to give him the fundamentals of language. Indeed, she kept up his baby talk, naming things by the sound he would make when he wanted an object, saying "moo" for milk, and "bud" for bread. As he became older, the parents expected him to outgrow his deficiencies. What a multitude of children have suffered from and been ruined by that great fallacy of parents, — to wait for a child to "outgrow" a fault or a disease! But Harry had not outgrown his infancy. His parents became more concerned; without realizing that they were the cause of all the boy's shortcomings, they grew irritated at him and began to scold him for his undeveloped speech and his lack of physical control, thus causing greater confusion in the child's mind and adding fear and inhibition

to the handicaps with which he was already burdened.

I told this mother very frankly where the fault lay, and told her that she must begin by changing herself and changing her home. That done, she had to start patiently from the beginning to teach the boy the correct association between words and the corresponding objects or actions; and she had to undertake a rigid programme for developing the child's physical control. Her only chance to save her child from becoming a permanent defective is to work so positively and powerfully at establishing new habits that they will automatically displace old habits. This child has a chance, a real chance, because to start with he had normal physical energies, normal mental faculties, and rather keen sensibilities. But it all depends upon the mother, — whether she will have the courage and patience to see through to the end the hard situation created by her own ignorance and neglect.

But just as children lag behind because of

neglect, just so do some lag behind because of its very opposite. A woman who had every advantage that money alone can give one, came to me in great distress over her ten-year-old daughter. "Since Jennie was a baby I have given her every care, every attention; I have given her everything!" the mother told me. "But now she is most unhappy, and so am I. I have her in one of the best private schools — a really good school, not just one of those fashionable ones — and they've given me final notice that I must take her out. They say they've tried and tried, but they can't make her work with any of their classes. They say she doesn't fit anywhere. It's all a mystery to me — when I've tried so hard! What's wrong with her? What can I do?"

Jennie proved to be very docile, apparently in no way actively troublesome; she was sweet and kind. But she was listless, irresponsible, had seemingly no power of concentration, and the things about her seemed to make no impression upon her mind or her

emotions. She seemed will-less, purposeless, — one of those sad figures that are bound for nowhere. Here was a child that was rapidly losing ground in her mental development. Her fate was plain if she continued as she was going: she would become a hysterical, disorganized, irritating, helpless young woman: from being a "problem" she would become a living tragedy, — one of those hopeless, helpless half-persons who are a misery to themselves and who, if they marry, are likely to propagate misery and incompetence.

A closer examination of the child revealed that behind her purposelessness and sluggishness of mind and body there had been, and still was in a dormant condition, more than average mentality and physical capabilities above the ordinary. What, then, was the matter? I went into the case yet further, — into the daily history of the little girl's life. And the mystery which had so puzzled the mother was easily solved. The mother had provided me the key to it all when she

had exclaimed, "I have given her everything!" The mother, in her great love for her daughter and her intense desire to have Jennie benefit from every advantage, had placed the child at an early age under the direct and constant charge of a governess who still had Jennie in her care, whom the mother earnestly described to me as "a most wonderful woman — simply wonderful!" I found that this governess, a well-educated woman, had a blind, fanatic devotion to her charge, and was conscientious to a supernormal degree in what she considered to be her duty.

Now there is no greater deterrent to success with children than blind devotion; and I write of this instance at such length for the reason that so many mothers, in their personal handling of their children, victimize their children through this very impulse. The governess had done and still was doing everything for and with Jennie. In her teaching and training of Jennie, she did nothing to stimulate the girl to original ef-

fort to think, and see, and work out things for herself. After several years of such devotion, the result upon the child's mentality, will, and emotions corresponded to what would be the effect of predigested foods being for a long period put into the human body; all processes of digestion would become sluggish and non-functioning through disuse. The child's originally good qualities were demoralized, almost atrophied; she had degenerated to the stage where she could not exercise her own faculties without the devoted governess at her side to start them going and keep them going.

This much learned, the task of helping Jennie regain her lost self was begun. First of all, Jennie was removed from the charge of the devoted governess, and the practice of years of doing everything for the child was interdicted. The child was taken out of school, and put in charge of the mother who was told what to do. The child's daily life was so arranged that application, original thinking, and independent work were re-

quired of her. To be specific (and this one instance will suggest to parents how to handle similar defects), her previous method of training had left undeveloped, had in fact deadened her power of observation and of coherent, orderly expression. To help correct this, she was required to write each day a letter to a real friend or a relative, — this to make the exercise more personal and interesting to her, and the better to stimulate her faculties; in this letter she was to tell of her daily experiences, of her various new interests, of the new things she had seen. At first this task was almost impossible for her; fifteen or twenty minutes would pass without a word upon the paper. It was suggested to her that she write a list of "The Things I Did Yesterday." This simple process of recalling experiences and associating words and ideas with concrete acts aroused a real interest in her; and the repetition, day after day, of this effort of writing down her experiences developed her interest in the writing and her ability to think and express her-

self orderly, and also developed her interest in the things she had done and was going to do. Further, the stimulus which came from replies helped to make the writing of these letters a pleasurable experience. Other concrete methods — all requiring Jennie to do things for herself, all under the direction of the now awakened mother — were undertaken to resuscitate and develop other of the child's dormant or stunted faculties, with the result that Jennie is no longer a misfit but is progressing rapidly and happily on the road to her true self.

Between these two extremes are a great variety of children who are only a fraction of what they should be. Most of us parents never guess how great is the number nor how different the varieties of the children and adults who lag behind, — because we have not the imagination to see how much more useful and happy many supposedly "average" people — or people who are just a little "off" — might be, and particularly because we have not been sufficiently trained to rec-

ognize that different children have different sorts of minds, and that to secure the best results these different minds must be differently approached.

There recently came under my observation a boy of nine who was two years behind where he should have been in school, and who was declared to be backward in every way. He was, according to reports which the mother had brought me, sullen, obstinate, utterly unmanageable, dull and slow to teach. The mother had been told by the superintendent of the boys' school that, coupled with his other irritating qualities, his dullness was so hopeless that he was using more time of the teachers than could possibly be given to one pupil, and she was notified that unless John showed decided improvement within a certain period she would have to withdraw him for the sake of the other students. Upon receipt of this notice, the mother began to work with John at home, desperately trying to bring about improvement within the required time. She began a driving régime;

she was always spurring him on. She tried promises, cajolery, threats, punishment. She tried shaming him; she pointed out to him constantly how boys far younger than he were doing things he was failing to do. Every kind of external pressure was used upon him to force him up to the work. But if the boy ever made an effort, there was no improvement. Presently, added to his other unpleasant and backward qualities, the boy developed a nervous condition so alarming in its character that the mother took the boy to a nerve specialist. This doctor was an honest man; he told the mother he could do nothing for John since fundamentally there was nothing wrong with him nervously or physically. At about the same time the mother received final notice to remove the boy from school. It was then that he first came under my attention.

I was told that this boy was particularly backward in his arithmetic, so I made my first tests in number work. I at once discovered that he was hopelessly at sea over

the simplest problem involving abstract figures; but when we proceeded to play store, I being his customer, and he being the storekeeper, he could easily give me the correct change. I tested him with other concrete game-lessons, with the result that it became obvious that this supposedly slow-witted, struggling John had originally had good normal faculties, with the sole exception that the native ability to grasp abstract ideas was almost totally lacking in him. His was essentially a concrete mind. And yet all his life his mother and teachers had been trying to teach him by routine, abstract methods, never recognizing that there did not exist in the boy any foundation on which one could build by such a method; never recognizing that the mind was there, but that the approach to the mind had to be over some other road. All his evil qualities, his sullenness, his quarrelsomeness, his hysteria were merely his natural reactions to the manner in which he had been handled. He was proud and sensitive; he rebelled against the

humiliation he had suffered; he saw every one as his enemy, and the human nature in him impelled him to try to get even with those whom he believed to be merely tormentors.

The treatment of this child was, in principle, very simple. The mother was brought to understand that the road to John's mind was through his sight and touch and physical activities. With this new understanding of John, there came a new attitude toward him. When John became aware that he was being treated with sympathy, as a friend and not as a sort of criminal, his own attitude of tense reserve and hostility dropped away from him; he relaxed, and his nervous and physical condition improved rapidly. The mother took him out of school and herself undertook to teach him, basing her work upon the necessity of presenting the lessons in a concrete way. The response was immediate. Within six months the previously slow-witted John seemed a new boy; and at the beginning of the following year he was

not only re-admitted to school, but upon taking examinations he was accepted in a higher class where the boys were of his own age, — and all this because the right approach to his mind had been found.

We are altogether too apt to consider all children to be alike, and therefore to be handled alike. I wish here to emphasize the fact that many children who lag behind their fellows, whose dullness we bemoan and too often berate, are merely the victims of our failure to find the right approach to their minds. There may be an entrance through the aptitude of some faculty which we have not discovered. For example, some children are definitely "ear-minded," some are definitely "eye-minded," and the failure to discover such a fact and make use of it means disaster for the child. Because a child's eyes are seemingly wandering during a lesson, it does not follow that his attention is not upon the lesson; his ears may be taking in every word. On the other hand the "eye-minded" child learns best by having his lessons pre-

sented concretely before his vision, and in a similar concrete method he can best answer questions and tell what he knows; at oral lessons he may be an utter failure. And so with special aptitudes of less obvious senses and faculties; failure to recognize them may mean stunting the child; discovering and using them may mean helping the child to its best possible development.

We must always be alive to the possible existence of these special avenues of approach, to any peculiar limitation which is often compensated for by the existence of a special faculty. There is the "ear for music." I mention it not because it has any special bearing upon the subject of this chapter, but because it is perhaps the most commonly recognized example of how a special faculty may exist in a person. Many of us know individuals without any real musical training but with a remarkable ear for music, who after hearing a single time a long composition or even an opera can sit down to a piano and within the limits of their own

and the piano's powers of reproduction can play everything they have heard. At the other extreme, I have a friend, an opera singer, who has a remarkable faculty for visualization. She does not memorize the words and music of a long and difficult rôle in the usual way; instead her mind photographs the pages of the score, and as she sings she mentally turns the pages. Such capacities of ear-memory and eye-memory are, of course, unusual phenomena. The point which I wish to drive home, even though I repeat myself, is that we must ever be on the lookout to find some quality not included in the routine virtues of childhood which may lead us to the child's heart and mind.

Again we all know children who lag behind because of a passivity, a dead inertia, which seems to control them; and we may not know what is the cause of that passivity. A boy of ten, backward in his school work and with almost no friends, against whom the chief complaint was that he was so nega-

tive in character that he almost drove parents and teachers to distraction, was brought to me. The report was that in the classroom he could not follow his lessons, that he was always losing his materials, that he never knew what he was told to do and that even if he did, he would not know how to do it. His favorite expression was " I don't know "; he seemed indifferent and oblivious to all things which interested the average child of his age; but with all these faults, the most depressing thing about him seemed to be that he was not bad enough, in a positive sense, to be treated or punished as a bad boy. Here was a child developing toward one of those disorganized, solitary, ungoverned persons with wandering souls: people whose vague, mild interests are ever shifting, who never get any place because they are always starting for some place else.

What I first noted about the boy was that his face was fine and sensitive. He was so shy that it proved slow and difficult work to establish friendly contact with him. At

length this was done by means of a toy engine and tracks, and a floor map of the world. These seized his interest, and I let him follow his bent. He made trips all over the earth, into strange lands, making strange discoveries about which he told me as his shyness fell away. Further experiments of a similar character, and a study of the child's history, revealed the secret of what was wrong with him. His imagination was his dominant quality, and he had been allowed to develop it at the expense of all his other faculties. Until his sixth year he had had no companionship of his own age. Having been left to amuse himself without guidance or discretion, or any one to share his play, he very naturally fell into the habit of making everything, regardless of its real character and purpose, serve the need of his imagination. More and more he lived within himself; more and more were the real things of life translated into the vagaries of his imagination.

To counteract this, or rather to develop

the rest of him up to the level of his imagination and thus lift him out of the class of laggards, he was given a course in the concrete, the practical. This was done with the greatest sympathy, patience, and with a constant care not to injure his imagination. From time to time he was taken to visit places of interest and was required on the following day to tell what he saw. He was given certain definite practical tasks about the house, which had to be performed regularly and for which he was held responsible; this trained his power of observation, his memory, and made him alert to the everyday things of life. To correct his carelessness with his play materials, he was held strictly responsible for them and the order in which they were kept. A few months of this enforced contact with the realities of life, and of enforced acceptance of the responsibilities of life, and the much-complained-of negative quality (which had, in reality, been the boy's living within himself) had been replaced by a very live and spontaneous interest in every-

thing about him — in his school work, his friends, his home, his parents — and had changed him from a backward boy to one who was keeping in the front ranks of the best of his age.

In trying to cure the case of a child who lags behind, we should never tag or label him with his deficiency; put him, so to speak, in the dunce's corner. Let us remember that almost invariably there is a cause. This means that both analytically and constructively we must do individual work with every child. We must not measure him by any common standards. Above all, we must not apply to him the cold, inhuman, scientific educational tests, which more often than not cause a child to react abnormally because of the unsocial conditions, so foreign compared to the child's everyday life, under which the tests are made: conditions where the child is handled all too frequently in an impersonal way as just so much laboratory material, where he is regarded merely as a "case."

The most fundamental things to have

right, in seeking to correct a child's backwardness, are his daily living conditions, his home conditions, and the relationship between him and the person or persons who come directly into touch with him, — what we ordinarily consider the minor things in life, but which have a greater influence upon a child than anything else. Perhaps nothing begets more perversity in children than an unsympathetic, non-understanding direction about little matters: nagging, criticizing, threatening, unwisely humoring. These may seem insignificant details, but through their constant repetition they become enormous influences upon the child's life, creating habits, inhibitions, deformities of mind and soul. In these apparently insignificant details we may find the cause which has made the child only half the person it is in him to be, and the cause which we must remove if we are to make the child his best self.

In trying to remedy the weakness of a child, we must particularly bear in mind three points: First, to study and work with

the child as an individual. Second, in establishing new habits, work with him only a brief period at a time; otherwise he will get tired, and fatigue will wipe out the new and helpful impressions. Third, our work must be centered upon the particular deficiency or weakness we wish to correct.

Above all else, we must remember to take an entirely new attitude toward the child. Bygones must remain bygones; allusions must not be made to bad habits and misdeeds of the past. The soul of our effort must be to bring a new, sympathetic, constructive stimulant into the child's life, which will create new and good habits in him; and through practice and repetition establish these new habits so positively and firmly that they will displace old habits and faults and weaknesses, so that eventually the renovated and renewed and happy child will lose all memory of ever having been anything else.

CHAPTER IV

WHY CHILDREN LIE

"CAN you tell me," the distressed mother asked, "why it seems to be so hard for Jane to tell the truth? I'm in despair about her — I simply cannot understand this terrible trait in her! I can see some reason for the big fibs she tells, but not for the little ones she is always telling."

The mother went on to cite examples of her daughter's lies. The girl did seem an amazingly prolific liar, and the thinness and futility of most of her inventions made her seem indeed a mystery. But in the midst of this recital the telephone rang in the adjoining room, and the mother opened the door and called:

"Jane, will you please answer the telephone. If it's Mrs. X, say that mother is not in."

The next moment the girl's voice was heard: "I'm sorry, Mrs. X, but mother is not in. — No, mother didn't leave word when she'd be back."

"Thank you, dear," said the mother; then closed the door and resumed her recital of her daughter's failings.

This telephone incident was instantly suggestive of an explanation of the mystery of the prevaricating Jane. Questions were put to the mother, which she readily answered, and presently all the mystery there was to Jane was no longer mysterious. The business of the telephone was a typical incident of the mother's relationship throughout her daily life. Here was a woman, charming, gracious, intensely well-meaning, and yet her life was a fabric of petty untruths, which she was so accustomed to tell that she was not even aware of their character. And in the environment of these petty untruths Jane was growing up, getting her guiding example, her inspiration.

"Why, I'd never thought of that!" ex-

claimed the mother, as she realized this relation between cause and effect.

This mother represents a large class of women who go on telling social lies, with never a thought of the influence of these untruths upon their children. The conventional standards of social politeness have so encroached upon their honest feelings that a social lie is uttered as a matter of course. It is a commonplace for such a woman to entertain friends at the house, outdoing herself in hospitality, urging her guests to come again, and the minute the friends are on the outside of the door to throw up her hands with, "At last they are gone; such bores!" It is a commonplace for her to accept a friend's telephoned invitation with seeming pleasure and the instant the receiver is hung up to exclaim, "Oh, how I hate to go there!" This woman flatters her friend's clothes and then just outside her hearing comments, "Hasn't she awful taste?" It is a commonplace to feign illness in order to escape an unpleasant duty. And the children hear all

these untruths, — and yet it is a mystery to these mothers why their Janes and Johns lie!

Here is one explanation — the supposedly harmless social lie — of why our children develop the deplored habit of telling untruths. For that we are to blame, but our guilt does not end there. If we parents will seek further, if we will closely examine all the facts of our relationship with our children, and if we will be honest in acknowledging what we discover, we will admit that the great reason why children lie is that in various ways, usually unconscious of what we are doing, we parents stimulate them to lie. The child is essentially imitative in acquiring habits and knowledge; and therefore learns far more from our general behavior and our treatment of him than from our orders. The influence of our concrete example is tremendous; by comparison our well-intentioned commands are just vague words, without meaning and without effect. And then in addition to the harmful pattern we set for him to copy, we incite the growth of the evil

habit in him by unconscious neglect, by unconscious injustice, by unconscious misunderstanding.

Is it unfair to place so great a blame upon ourselves? Let us look into the matter. If I do succeed in showing that the bulk of the blame for this failing of our children is our own, I do it in the certain knowledge that all parents who read this will make haste to correct in themselves whatever fault may be an influence for evil in their children's lives.

Consider the child's instinct for self-protection and self-defense, and what happens when that instinct is aroused by hasty or unjust action. The following incident, so ordinary that it might have happened in any home, concretely illustrates how we parents, following a blind sense of right and wrong, are responsible for sowing the lie seed in our children.

Six-year-old John, sensitive, powerful, with a definite will of his own, was attacked by his impulsive sister, four years his senior, who violently snatched a ball from John's

hand while he was playing with it. Her only excuse was that she happened to want to play with that ball at that moment. John, incensed by her interference, was determined to get his ball back. He put up a fight and being at a disadvantage because of inferior weight and height, naturally resorted to the only available weapons at his command, — his nails. As his nails dug into her cheeks, Jane shouted frantically for help.

The mother came hurrying in upon the scene and seeing the scratched face of the sister, without stopping to investigate the cause of the trouble, she seized John and insisted that he at once tell sister how sorry he was. "But, mother, I am not sorry," John wept. But in the mother's opinion John's own feelings had no place in the matter; he had to say he was sorry, and for thirty minutes the mother relentlessly kept at the child. She threatened to tell his father about it when he came home; that unless he said he was sorry he should have no supper. John held out, but realizing his helplessness,

hungry and weary and fearing his father, he yielded and finally without in the least meaning it, he muttered, " I am sorry."

At once the mother picked him up, kissed him, told him he was a good boy, said that they were friends again, and served him his supper with an extra bit of cake as a reward, little dreaming that in exacting this insincere expression of regret from John and paying him for it she had taught him to lie and had proved to him that lying has its own reward.

Another practice by which we stimulate children's lying is our failure to give our children directions that are simple, clear and reasonable. We bury our directions in too many words; we give them hurriedly, inaccurately; and too often our directions are based upon so little thought that they strike even the childish mind as unfair. And then, if the child does not instantly respond to what must sound to him a mere confusion of words, we grow impatient with him; we repeat our directions, perhaps this time using a new combination of words. The result is

that often the only definite impression the child receives from all our talk is that he *must* or *must not do something,* or he will be punished. Then to our question of whether or not he has done as he was told, the child guides his reply by what he thinks we expect it to be; his one thought is to save himself from punishment, and he answers accordingly without regard to truth.

The following bit of conversation on a beach one summer afternoon between a mother and her eleven-year-old daughter will illustrate this particular point.

" Betty, did you dive to-day? "

The sharpness of the mother's voice, the look in her eye, prompted a frightened, defensive " No " from the lips of the little girl. But her denial did not save her.

" Why, Betty — you did so! " spoke up a small boy who had been on the raft with the little girl and who had seen her dive.

" Betty, I am ashamed of you for disobeying me and then lying about it! " exclaimed

the mother. "Did I not tell you not to dive?"

"But you said that when I had a cold, and I'm all right now," Betty tried to explain. "I thought you meant while I had a cold."

"I meant you to understand you were never to dive. Haven't I told you it is bad for you, that you overdo and get tired and chilled, and that is why you get colds?"

"But, mother, you told me I could take part in the girls' diving contest on the Fourth of July."

"That is a different matter," the mother replied. "I did *not* tell you to dive outside of that."

"But I have to practice for that contest, mother. It's only a week from now, and you know I won't have any chance to win unless I practice."

"Don't try to argue with me! For this disobedience and lying to me you cannot be in the diving contest or any other of the Fourth of July games," was the mother's

final decision. "You've got to learn to stop lying!"

Betty was heartbroken, but she had lied and her mother was determined that she had to be punished. Yet it was the mother's confused, incomplete and illogical directions that were responsible for Betty's lying. And unless Betty is very unlike the average child, the punishment meted out to her will have little curative value. She will feel the injustice of both directions and punishment, and the effect is likely to be to stimulate her to be merely shrewder in her lying.

Our children's lies often spring from our not understanding their needs and our seeking to govern them by arbitrary rules and reiterated don'ts. Such treatment had made Donald into a little liar, — a source of bewildered misery to his mother and father.

"Can you explain," his mother asked, "why Donald always gives me garbled accounts of everything that happens to him? He does not seem to be able to tell the truth! For instance," the mother continued, "the

other day he came home from school with his clothes torn, his hands and face black, all evidences of his having played ball. To my question why he had played ball when I had told him not to play, he absolutely denied playing; he told me he was just watching other boys play, that he had fallen into a puddle of water. He did not know how his sweater got torn, that he guessed a boy must have torn it; the hole in his stocking was a total surprise to him; he did not know how it happened.

" Then again, Donald lies when there is no reason for his lying. Instead of riding to and from school, Donald often walks both ways and saves his nickels. One day he appeared with a new top. When I asked him where he got it, he deliberately told me a neighbor's boy had given it to him. The next time I saw the boy I thanked him for giving Donald the top, and the boy in childish fashion said, ' No, I did not give it to Donald; he bought it himself.' Donald is obstinate and strong-willed, and his father and I in-

sist on his obedience. We usually succeed in the end, but it means a terrific struggle all the time. As for his lying, we simply cannot understand it and we don't seem to be able to do anything to cure it."

Examination proved eight-year-old Donald to be a physically powerful boy with splendid mentality, originality, and with a powerful will of his own, — doubtless a combination of both his father's and mother's wills. His life was ruled by the arbitrary orders from his two exacting parents without thought of the child's nature and how it should be treated, and all his activities were restricted by thoughtless *don'ts*. Donald naturally rebelled against this crushing suppression of his powers. He was afire inside with irritation and resentment; inwardly he lived in a world of emotional chaos. His lying was the logical consequence of the treatment he received from his parents. He was in such confusion and bewilderment himself that many times he himself was not conscious that in his speech he

merely reflected his inward confusion. Many times he lied without being aware of it.

The treatment this boy required was the removal of the senseless, autocratic dominance which ruled his life. The recommendation for the mother was that for awhile, at least, she should discipline herself and give the boy greater freedom for self-expression, and stop all meaningless don'ts. If for good reasons it were necessary to deprive Donald of certain opportunities for activity, others equally interesting should be substituted to give him an outlet for his powers.

The mother at once saw her error and was frank enough to admit her mistaken treatment of her boy. She realized his needs and in a persistent and consistent way went to work to meet them. To provide sufficient opportunities for his body and mind, the mother secured materials for him to work with. Donald had always wanted to do things with his hands, but his father would

not let him touch a tool, and his mother would not let him mess up the house. Now, Donald has a chest of tools of his own, a table is arranged for him in one corner of the father's garage, and from bits of wood, tin and wire all kinds of ingenious creations are constructed by him. Donald is a different boy now. With the releasing of his own powers through constructive and satisfying channels, he has gained peace and poise and self-confidence. He has nothing to hide and nobody to fear. It is the natural thing for him to tell the truth.

Perhaps the most painful cases of children's lying come from parents who have whole-heartedly tried to give their best to make the most of their children: parents who gave themselves selflessly, but unfortunately blindly, without knowledge and understanding of their children's particular nature and individual needs, with the result that all their wonderful devotion was sown on barren, sickly soil and in turn yielded sickly fruit.

Such a case was that of Mary. Until about

the age of seven the parents could not recall that they had any difficulty with Mary. She was a joyous, romping little girl, the center of a group of children who played with her. But from the time she began to go to school, a change came over her; it seemed as if some evil spirit possessed her. Her record at school was a bitter disappointment to the parents; the more so because it was their dream that she should be a brilliant student. They held her rigidly to her tasks, they tried to drive her; but as the years passed, she showed interest in none of the subjects taught her; she did wretched work, barely keeping up with her class; she disliked the teachers and above all she hated the school. From time to time the parents changed school; they tried special schools and had private tutors to coach her. But all this care and effort seemed of no avail. In every school she was a failure; and thus ten years dragged by.

But her failure in studies was not the worst of her school record. During the ten years she developed into a confirmed liar; she was

guilty of every kind of trickery and deception at school, bringing disgrace on herself and her parents. The climax to this phase of her development came when she was seventeen.

One evening both parents went out, leaving Mary at home, apparently working on her lessons. At ten o'clock the parents returned and found their bedroom in a topsy-turvy condition. In fear they shouted for the missing Mary. A closet door opened, and Mary came tremblingly out and told in detail of a dark, whiskered man who had robbed the house, first ordering her into the closet. The parents checked up the loss; the only thing missing was $40 in cash which was taken out of a bureau drawer. A detective who was called in on the case was convinced after examination that the disarrangement of the room was not the work of a professional thief, that it had all the marks of hands familiar with the contents of the room. The parents realized what had happened and before long they got the con-

fession from the hysterical Mary. She had taken the money, — had taken it for the purpose of running away from home.

This outline of Mary's history was given me by Mary's despairing mother, who in response to questions went on, " The only time she seems like a normal being nowadays is when she's outdoors. Her greatest delight is to take long hikes into the country, building fires by a stream and cooking her own food over them. She loves flowers. She comes home with arms full of branches and wild flowers. We are simple, honest people for generations back," the mother continued; " the grandparents on both my side and my husband's side have been among the pioneer settlers of the great middle west."

The description of the girl's love for the outdoors and the mother's statement of the great part the outdoors had played in previous generations suggested the possibility that at the bottom of this girl's lying were no evil spirits but a blind struggle to find satisfaction for some very natural and all-de-

manding need. It was very difficult at first to get at her, for Mary looked upon everybody with suspicion. But after some weeks Mary and I were friends, and bit by bit her side of the story came out. Ever since she could remember, school had been to her a prison. She could not stand being shut up in a room with studies that to her were dead. From the time she entered school, there was but one thought in her heart and mind, and that was how to get away from it, and she spent her years there plotting and scheming how to achieve this end. She began by pretending illness so that she might be sent home by the teachers; she played truant; she brought notes, supposedly written by her parents but in fact forged by her, begging, for one reason or another, to be excused from lessons. All during the ten years she practiced every kind of sham, duplicity and prevarication to gain her freedom. "I could not tell anybody what I felt. If I only could!" Mary one day told me. "I only knew something, something big, was pulling

me somewhere and I was bound to get there."

This rebellion of Mary had never been investigated; no effort had been made to find out what was behind it all. Her conduct had been interpreted by her parents as merely willful stubbornness, ingratitude, disobedience, and her lies as inborn perversity.

It will be of interest to those who may have a similar problem to know that this apparently vicious young person, who for ten years was a torment to her parents, is now a normal, vital, sympathetic and truthful young woman. And there was no miracle in the transformation; it was a plain case of going to the bottom of the trouble, discovering Mary's particular nature and giving it an opportunity to express itself through the medium which made the strongest appeal to it. She was taken out of school, and in order to give her a new start and a new environment, she was sent to live with some understanding friends on their beautiful farm; these friends treated her with the greatest

consideration, never referring to her past. They allowed her to help with the care of the farm, and she went at her tasks with great enthusiasm. Before long she had a piece of land to experiment with, and at the end of the summer Mary had an unusually successful old-fashioned flower garden of her own.

To-day, five years later, Mary has a small flower garden farm of her own near the friends with whom she had spent a year. She is at her work from sunrise to sunset; she loves her work, gives herself wholeheartedly to it, and she is as honest in all her relationships as she is with her flowers, which she handles with as great love and care as if they were human beings.

But in our efforts to establish the habit of truth-telling in our children, we must not fall into the error of regarding any and every deviation from literalness as an essential lie. We must learn to distinguish when a lie is not a lie. Judged from the standard of pure literalness, most fairy tales are lies; so are the Mother Goose Stories; so are many other

of the classics of childhood. However, we do not hold these in reprobation; we accept them for the colorful, stimulating delights which they contain. But when these same qualities appear in our children, we are too likely not to recognize them. We forget that many children live largely in the land of make-believe, and that often there is no difference in actuality to them between the events of their fancy and the events of their everyday life. Both are equally real. Unless we remember that the imaginative child habitually ascribes life to inanimate playthings — to the dolls, to the wooden horse, to all the animals of the toy farmyard — and naturally speaks of incidents which have occurred only in his fancy as incidents of his real life; unless we remember this tendency of the imaginative child, we may regard some extravagant and obviously untrue statement as a symptom of the child's infection with the disease of lying and act upon that hasty diagnosis with results that may be

ruinous to the child's character and disastrous to our relationship with him.

With lying, as with any other disease, an ounce of prevention is worth many pounds of cure. The best prevention, in fact the only prevention which is within our power to exercise, is for us parents to be at *all times* simple, direct, honest with our children in *all relationships.* We all recognize the importance of building a sound physical foundation in our children from their earliest years. If we wish to develop all-around wholesome human beings we must, with equal thought, lay in our children the foundation for their ethical development. And particularly must we remember that if we are to succeed in this prevention, we cannot begin our work too soon. It cannot be said too often that the first six years of the child's life are the most important in his growth. It is during these years that the child's instincts and powers begin to develop, when he learns as easily as he breathes, when he is most formative, impressionable, responsive

to influences of environment and training. It is during these early years more than in any other period that we, through our daily commonplace experiences and relationships with him, either develop or destroy the ethical fiber of our children.

If a new decalogue could help parents to save their children from the sin of lying, then I would submit these ten commandments for their study and guidance.

1. At all times speak to your child simply and clearly, and in giving directions use as few words as possible so there will be no chance for his misunderstanding.
2. Do not arbitrarily suppress his natural energies, so that he will be forced to seek a secret and illegitimate outlet for them which he will be tempted to conceal by untruths.
3. Answer his questions honestly, not with half truths.
4. Satisfy his curiosity wisely lest he seek

satisfaction through unwholesome channels and be compelled to lie to cover his guilty knowledge.

5. Do not emphasize his mistakes and transgressions, making them become black monsters to him and making him ashamed to speak of them freely.
6. Trust your child. Do not question him with suspicion lest you stimulate in him the fear of punishment which will lead him to lie in self-defense.
7. Do not judge children by the adult standard of right and wrong, lest the child, in order to come up to it, will be forced to deception.
8. Do not crush or punish a child's honest outspoken observation merely because some adult's vanity might be hurt by a true criticism it contains, lest the child be led to hypocrisy.
9. Do not mistake the child's fancy, his imaginative playfulness, for lies. Remember that his imaginative world is

as real to him as our material world is real to us.

10. Honor your children. From the earliest years treat them with the same consideration you would give your equals.

CHAPTER V

MAKING OUR DREAMS COME TRUE

WE parents who live for our children and wish for them greater happiness and often greater success in life than we have had usually have definite dreams for them. We usually know, or think we do, what we want our children to do and be. Some of us, indeed, know the very niche in the world's hall of fame that we want our children to occupy; and in all devotion we set ourselves to work to prepare our children to occupy that niche. And in return for our unselfish effort, though we may not proclaim it, we expect our children's love, respect and gratitude.

Yet, despite our efforts and expectations, these dreams as a general rule do not come true. Our children's lives do not turn out either so happy or so successful as we had

planned them to be; and to add to the irony of the situation, our children, when they awaken to their failures, not realizing the utter good will that has guided us, sometimes turn against us as being responsible for the bitterness of their lives.

Why does this happen, and happen over and over, as we all know to our sorrow? There is something wrong here; but before we try to cure, let us diagnose the case; let us search for the germs of the disease; let us find out the mistakes that lie behind this wrong, so that we may clear them away.

The great reason for the failure of our dreams, as our diagnosis will show us, is that we so frequently base our dreams upon misconceptions; and upon this foundation of misconceptions we further try to build these dreams into realities by using unsound methods. A few concrete instances of the mistakes we commonly make may be suggestive of numerous other errors in our attitude towards the child's future, and in our handling of our child to fit that future. Perhaps

the most dangerous element that interferes with our dreams and their fulfillment — here I know I am speaking a commonplace, but it is by such commonplaces that the lives of hundreds of thousands of children are made or unmade — is our tendency to have a preconceived idea and ideal of what our children should and must be. And this ideal is too often based upon our pride and ambition, rather than upon a careful study of the child's nature.

"It took a railroad accident to bring the first real blessing into my life," Mr. H. grimly told me; and the story which he related, by its suggestive power, made visible in my mind a sad procession of thousands of children whose parents' personal wishes and ambitions have spoiled their children's lives, — and incidentally have played havoc with the parents' cherished dreams. Mr. H.'s father, a successful lawyer, set his heart upon his son taking up and carrying on his own work. All during his school and college years the son had a profound interest in

literature and an even more profound interest in people and in life in general. He had no inclination whatever for a legal career, and much less for a business career; but this the father never stopped to consider. On graduating from college, all pressure was brought to bear upon the son to enter a law school, and when he had finished this course, similar pressure was used to induce him to enter his father's office. For ten years he carried on the law work, — hating it, and hating himself for doing it, and becoming a pessimist and a cynic.

Then came his injury in a railroad wreck; and in consequence he had to spend several years in hospitals and sanatoriums. He learned that, although his mind was sound enough, his physical recovery would be only partial; that he would be unfit to resume his legal career. Debarred from a physically active life, he decided to try himself out along the lines that had never ceased to appeal to him. In hospital beds and sanatorium chairs he began to write. He found that he had

something he wanted to say; he found that he could write, and that he wanted to write more than anything else in the world. But here he was beginning a new profession at thirty-three. Years have passed since then; it has been a hard struggle; he has begun to achieve a real distinction, — a distinction that he would have won much earlier but for the ten years which he lost in trying to adjust himself to a work for which he was never fitted. He is happy now in a rather grim way, for his own dream for himself is coming true; but it was disaster that gave him his chance to find his life's fulfillment, and not his father's ambitions and rigid dreams for him.

Another suggestive matter for us to consider in our diagnosis of the elements that stand between our dreams and their fulfillment is our very human tendency to overvalue what we perceive as special talent in our children. Perhaps our child can do one thing unusually well for his age, and in our dreams we see him as a genius. That par-

ticular gift or talent (it may after all be no more than a temporary development of some quality beyond the average for his age) we often encourage the child to "show off." The result is that such a child almost invariably gets an exaggerated opinion of himself and his ability, becomes self-conscious, and what is far worse, falls into the habit of doing only the things which come most easily to him. In this process of self-indulgence, not only the child's other qualities are neglected, but even that special quality which might have been a talent degenerates through lack of disciplined training. Our young "genius" may become in the end one of that pathetic class of people who are superficially clever, but who can do nothing well enough to win position or command trust and responsibility.

Though the child prodigy rarely develops into a mature prodigy, nevertheless too many of us entirely forget this same commonplace fact in dreaming about the children we love so well. The story told me by a mother who

came to me with the question, " Can you make something out of a twenty-year-old girl? " is the story of many lives that started on the road to fame too early in life — and the story of many shattered dreams.

" My daughter is pretty, clever and attractive," said this mother, " but she is nearly killing me with her temper and selfishness. She is an actress and wants to be a ' star ' but she will not hold a position with a manager for a week. When she is given a chance in a small part, she will not rehearse, she will not take orders. She simply will not work, and yet she wants nothing but the first place."

With questions I tried to get at what lay behind this condition; and finally I elicited the following facts: This twenty-year-old young woman, the mother told me, had been a very, very beautiful child — " violet-blue eyes and golden curls." One day, at the age of about three years, just as she was stripped for her bath, an organ-grinder began to play outside the window, and the high-spirited

child began to improvise a dance. At once, the mother confessed to me, she saw her child as a "natural-born dancer." From that time on the mother encouraged the child to dance in the nude, with a bit of veiling over her, to the strains of light and inviting music which she played for her, and very soon she began to encourage her little daughter to dance before friends. One can readily realize that the sight of any normal little child's body, swinging rhythmically to music, can delight the adult's imagination to a degree out of all relation to its quality as an artistic performance.

The little child was allowed and even urged to dance in public at every opportunity; she was allowed to receive all kinds of attention and praise; and, for years, that little girl was led to believe that her dancing had rarest merit. As a matter of fact, above the natural charm belonging to any well-formed, childish body, the little girl possessed very little equipment beyond a few steps and a few tricks in posing. She was given les-

sons, but these merely served to increase her repertoire of poses. She was a success up to the age of ten. But as she grew older she became less effective; her audiences were more critical; naturally they could no longer apply the same standards to the performance of a grown-up girl that formerly had been applied to a child, — and she had only a child's equipment.

Not until then did the mother realize that what her daughter needed was real training and preparation, if she were ever to do this work well. The mother set about to give the girl the training, but by this time the girl was demoralized as far as habits of hard work and concentration were concerned. She had been too much and too long in the limelight to accept the obscurity and drudgery which are the necessary preliminaries to real achievement. At present hardly anything less than a miracle can save this girl; she is almost certainly doomed to a life of bitter disappointment, — and all because her mother saw a very little thing as a very big

thing. Further, to add to the tragedy, this girl later on may in her mind follow the trail of her life back to the beginning of it all and come to hate her mother.

Many a fond dream for our children has been wrecked because of a false valuation of facts and ideals; because we have based our dreams upon conventional standards rather than upon reality. And in the very process of wrecking dreams, we have wrecked them at the cost of the greatest imaginable self-sacrifice on our part. And these false standards rule, and these sacrifices are made, in all economic classes. In many years experience with what we not very happily call the working classes, I have found parents making almost indescribable sacrifices, living on next to nothing, working day and night, in order to help their children into what (according to convention) are considered superior positions in life; and doing all this without any sound preliminary thought as to the qualification of their children to occupy the positions of their dreams. " I will not have John

a tailor, a mechanic, a working-man; he shall be a doctor, a lawyer." "I shall not have Mary go into a shop; she shall become a teacher." Such are the cherished determinations of tens of thousands of parents; and Mary and John, through the greatest imaginable deprivation on the part of the parents, at length complete a college education. And then, often, after years of struggle on the part of both parents and child, it is found that John would make a far better mechanic than a doctor (and as such would probably earn far more money), and Mary would make a very much better dressmaker than a teacher and as such be better paid. In these cases there has been the best intention and the highest motive, but the dreams failed because they were wrong dreams.

These few illustrations will serve to suggest to us other mistakes we make in building the future of our children, will suggest other errors that are impediments between our dreams and their fulfillment. So much for diagnosis; now for a constructive pro-

gramme. These mistakes we must remove; but far more fundamental, on the constructive side, is the adoption of an entirely different attitude toward the future of our children. To have our dreams — or what should be our dreams — come true in the highest sense means to have the child develop into the best person that potentially exists within him. And to succeed in this new idea of a dream requires that, for a *definite dream,* we must substitute an *elastic method.*

The essence of this method is that we must try to find out — a difficult task at the best — what is the finest potentiality that exists in our child. To do this, we must start with giving our children an all-around development; we must so train them that all their natural faculties, their powers and resources will be called actively into use, — so that they will respond fully and react normally to all the stimuli of the outside world. Under such conditions of free development, the strongest and most valuable quality has its best chance to grow and reveal itself by

standing out in front of other qualities; and special talent, if the child has any, has its best chance to win our definite and sound recognition.

To give our children an all-around development does not imply a material revolution in the household, nor does it necessarily involve a greater expenditure of time or of money than is already given to our children. It does imply a more intelligent understanding of the little child and his qualities, and a serious appreciation of the importance of the first six years, roughly speaking, of the child's existence, — when his fundamental instincts unfold, when his habits are established, when the foundation of his future is laid. I can only restate here most briefly what I have given more fully elsewhere in this volume and in even greater detail in my earlier book "How To Know Your Child." The child's training should begin at birth. From that time on, it must be our serious business to help the child make the best possible use of his inner urging; of his instincts;

of his impulses; of his nerves and of his muscles. To achieve these results we need only make use of the insignificant, usually overlooked, commonplace experiences of the child's everyday life.

Few things will help so much toward the realization of this new sort of dream as permitting and even requiring the child to experiment with himself. By this I do not mean that the child should be allowed to undertake numberless things and leave them half-finished when the details begin to bore him, thus implanting habits of irregularity and instability; I mean that the child should thoroughly test himself at whatever he undertakes.

The value of experimentation I can perhaps best make clear by presenting the case of a young man whom I shall call Jack. His childhood and early boyhood were spent in an atmosphere of music and painting, his father being a well-known painter and his mother an accomplished musician. His friends and relatives naturally expected

him to be a distinguished artist of some sort. But his parents early recognized that, though he might be induced to follow some artistic line and might become a moderate success because of the artistic circumstances which had always surrounded him, the boy in reality had no worth-while gift for painting, music or any other art. They therefore decided to give Jack full freedom to find out what he best liked to do and could do.

All through Jack's high school and college years his parents encouraged him to spend at least part of his summers in experimenting with different occupations. Jack's imaginative and adventurous nature responded with pleasure to these suggestions. He tried the automobile industry one summer. He learned to run a car, after a fashion, so long as it ran itself, but he never found any pleasure in trying to find out what was wrong when the car was in trouble; and in the factory itself he was a bewildered, imprisoned soul. He decided that he was not mechanically inclined; and this decision

was strengthened by later experiences in a printing shop and in an electrical plant.

The summer that he was eighteen he tried farming. Naturally he did not enjoy all the hard work that was required of him; but here, for the first time, he began to find himself. He became much attracted to the soil; he loved the feel of it and he developed a very keen interest in its product. He went back to farming for the next two summers, and he finally decided that the growing of fruits interested him most of all. During the last two years at college he specialized in horticulture, and by the time he graduated he knew what he wanted to do, in a practical way, more than anything else. To-day, instead of being a painter struggling without interest toward mediocrity, he is on an orange ranch in California, happy in his work, alive with eager plans.

Very often the thing which attracts a young person in theory, or at a distance, is the very thing for which he may not be qualified. This is another matter to which we

must give serious attention in our endeavor to build our dreams upon our children's real capacities.

Some time ago a young woman came to me for advice as to whether she should take up kindergarten training. She told me that she had always loved children, that she loved to play with them, that she would love to teach them. Didn't I think that with such a feeling toward children she would make a success as a kindergartener?

After talking with the young woman for a while I realized that she did have a great fondness for children, but that she looked upon them as so many precious dolls or pieces of bric-a-brac, which must be handled with great care, lest they break; and that she believed that all you need to do to teach children is to tell them what the right thing is, show them how to do it, and that, if you are nice and pleasant enough, you are sure to have results. I realized that she knew as much about children as most of us know about birds.

My advice to this young woman was that if she really wanted to find out whether she had the necessary qualifications to fit her for work with children, in a serious way, she must live with children for a while. I advised her to take a position for an entire summer as a nursery maid to a little child; to learn all about his physical care and how much depends on it; to learn what a child's life is, how he reacts under certain conditions. I told her that living with a little child from day to day was the best method of finding out if children interested her to such a degree that she could develop the patience, the endurance, and the sympathetic understanding children require from those who would deal with them with serious, constructive ideas.

This young woman followed my advice. She took a position as a mother's helper in a very delightful family. Every consideration and all coöperation were given her; but she soon found the work beyond her; it was not what she had expected it to be. She was

honest enough to admit that the shortcoming was her own; that the child as a growing, opening, changing personality did not interest her; that she had not the patience and adaptability for a child's demands. She found pleasure in teaching the child and playing with him only in so far as this gave her an outlet for her exuberant and spirited nature and in so far as the child happened to respond. The minute there was opposition on the child's part, the work became most tiresome to her. She could not make herself interested in the child's problems.

But, besides learning through this practical experience what she could *not* do, this young woman also learned what she *could* do. This becoming a part of the family, having an opportunity to assist in whatever line she could and would, gave the young woman a chance to learn that she had a very keen sense for housekeeping in general, and cooking in particular. She again and again would ask the mother to look after the small child while she undertook some of the house-

work or the cooking, which she did most successfully and enjoyed greatly. Her summer's experience stimulated her to study domestic science; on taking it up, she found it even more interesting and more to her liking, and after a time she specialized in food value and food preparation. To-day she is holding a very important position, in connection with one of the best hospitals, as expert on dietetics. She is extremely happy and extremely successful; her original dream for herself did not come true, but a better one for her has, — and it came true because she had the courage to experiment and then the good sense to adapt herself to what she found.

Another way of helping our dreams come true, through this method of helping our children to find themselves, is by bringing in a concrete way new interests into our children's lives, particularly a knowledge of the world's big activities and industries. Nothing perhaps can serve that end better than taking the children on simple visits to places

of practical interest; and connecting, whenever possible, the children's school work with the living facts of life. Museums are interesting to children, but only in an objective way; they are too remote, too dead, too passive, to arouse a child's deep, active interest. What usually makes a stronger appeal to the youthful mind and imagination, what stimulates personal interest and fires ambition is seeing the actual working of creative energies.

Recently I had the rich experience of visiting an automobile plant in the company of a group of school children. After observing the various departments where the separate parts of the car were constructed, we finally found ourselves at one of the tracks on which the cars were assembled. A multitude of parts were suspended above the track, — each part before the work began seemingly a disconnected unit, complete in itself, but lifeless, useless. Then the assembling started. The parts were lowered in rapid succession according to a carefully devised programme;

and one by one the skilled workmen fitted them into their appointed places with an amazing swiftness and precision. Within perhaps twenty minutes those dead parts swinging in the air were a completed automobile, and then the car ran off the track under its own power. It seemed to the breathless children that a miracle had happened before their eyes; that the car was a throbbing, living creature, magically brought into being, and not a mere machine. So stirred were they by what had happened and by the performance of the car, that spontaneously they burst into applause.

After a pause, one of the children remarked, " If it were not for that oil the whole car would not work." " But what about the engine? That's the most important part — that's what makes the car go," spoke up another. " Yes, but the tires, — if you have one little hole in one then you are in trouble and the engine can't help you." In a very little while every part of the car was mentioned, its importance discussed, some ex-

pressing their preference as to what part they would rather make.

Right there and then the children learned in a most concrete and dramatic way the lesson of coöperation, of organization, and of the value of doing one's job as well as it can be done. They learned for themselves that every part of the car was essential, that everybody's work on the car was important, that the big achievement was the result; that every bit of work, however small in itself, counted and contributed toward the final completion of the car. By this contact with real work they learned — only a little, of course, for such experiences should be frequently repeated — something that is certain to be of value in the realization of the soundest dreams for them.

What I have here written must not be taken as a rigid formula; its whole spirit is *elasticity*. We must ever remember that each child is a separate problem and requires individual handling. And we must remember that with all our thought and care we

may not be able to help our child choose unmistakably his best occupation. Many factors that we cannot foresee and that are not within our control enter into the final decision; but this much always is within our power: *to avoid the serious mistake of forcing our children arbitrarily, blindly, into a line of interest regardless of their fitness;* to avoid withholding from them that training and cultivation which makes for an adequate directing intelligence.

This is not a perfect recipe for making our dreams come true; there can be none. It is only a more intelligent and therefore more hopeful method. And while I wish to arouse hope, I wish to arouse caution, — and also patience. We must recognize at the very beginning that this method, this search for the best person in our child, may require (and should require) years of waiting; and then we may discover that after all what we have is just a nice all-around son or daughter with no marked talent in any direction. But a man or woman who can do his share of

the world's everyday work, whatever the work may be, efficiently and competently, is a valuable human asset; and even though we have produced no genius, yet by such a method we have made our child the best that was in him. And having done this much, we have every right to consider that we have made our dreams come true.

CHAPTER VI

OUR FRIENDS AND OUR CHILDREN

FRIENDSHIP is one of Heaven's most supreme gifts, and certainly our friends should be cherished. But for the very reason that our friends are so dear and close to us, and have so great an influence upon us, hardly any other element outside the home touches the lives of our children so intimately and so frequently as do our friends. Our friends, therefore, are a great possible influence for good or harm in the lives of our children. Therefore our friends, the extent to which we shall allow them to influence us in the handling of our children, and the extent to which they shall directly influence our children constitute one of our very gravest problems and concerns.

The facing of this problem requires that we must know our friends; must study them;

must know them, that is, from the standpoint of the best interest of our children. Among our friends, if we are fortunate, we may have a few who are wise and experienced in regard to children (though possibly we may not recognize which of our friends these are), and their advice and help is to be cherished. Also there are those who know little or nothing about children; and these, for very sound reasons, may be our dearest personal friends. This latter is the more numerous class; there are ten of the last to one of the first; and since the training of children seems to them so simple a problem, these last are the most prompt to express convictions and give unhesitating advice. Therefore, since these last constitute a major problem, it is of them that I shall chiefly write.

How, then, are we to know the friends of this second class? I shall give a few typical examples of these would-be helpful friends and of what they try to do; and these few may suggest others to the reader, and the

various problems they create among our children.

There is the friend who has model children — listened to with all the more respect by us on that account — who measures all children according to the perfection of her own, and who is always frank about voicing her comparisons. "I simply cannot see how your Joe has time to waste on baseball," such a friend firmly declared to a mother whose boy she had been for some time observing — "and in winter for skating and coasting! My Jim is in the same class with Joe at school, and though he's clever, he has time for nothing at all but his lessons, if he does his lessons *properly*. I simply don't see how Joe keeps up with his class!"

Joe's mother had great regard for the opinion of her neighbor. Until this occasion she had been satisfied with Joe's school report and had paid almost no attention to the amount of time he had been giving his lessons. Now she became suddenly aware that Joe was really playing about quite a bit. See-

ing only the apparent fault her neighbor had pointed out, and not pausing to examine into the actual facts, Joe's mother began to rebuke the boy for his neglect of his lessons and his laziness, holding out Jim as an example for him to follow. She required Joe to sit at his lessons daily for a definite period after school hours, and punished him if he rebelled or failed to meet this time requirement.

The result of this action upon the friend's advice is that Joe is now doing poor work at school, whereas before his average had been good, — at least as good as Jim's. Worse than that, there is now constant irritation and quarreling between Joe and his mother. What had been on the whole a very pleasant relationship has become an almost unbearable irritation. The mother is distressed and bewildered, but the explanation is simple. She has been swayed by her friend who has only one standard of ability for children. In reality Joe has a very keen mind, a quick understanding, and a retentive memory; in consequence, he had been able to do his school

work in about one-half the time taken by Jim, and he therefore had had time to satisfy the demands of his active body and high spirits. On his side Joe, with his intelligence and pride, cannot see sense or justice in his mother's requirements, and he very humanly explodes in rebellion against them.

Now this variety of well-meaning friend we may recognize by his or her single standard: so much ability to be exhibited for so many years, and so much time to be devoted to this task and that subject. Age and weight are the supreme guides to these experts on childhood. As a matter of fact, however valuable as an indication in themselves, such factors prove nothing in making comparisons. Children, though similar in age and weight, may be most unsimilar in their physical powers, mental faculties and general abilities.

As dangerous as may be the one-standard friend, just as dangerous may be the friend who holds up too high a standard for our children.

"What shall I do about John's bragging?" a distressed mother asked me. "He is constantly saying he has done this big thing or that big thing. But when I find out he hasn't actually done what he said, he still maintains he has done it and can do it. I simply cannot understand it!"

I saw John and discovered him to be an imaginative, ambitious boy. Also I learned that his mother had told the truth; he was addicted to boasting. I sought the cause of this, and my questioning brought into the case an Aunt Mary, greatly respected by John's mother, and herself the mother of a girl two years John's senior. Aunt Mary was tremendously proud of her Jennie and of the girl's achievements. She was constantly telling John's mother about this unusual thing that Jennie had done and that unusual thing; about how good she was; and about the presents she (Aunt Mary) was giving Jennie because of her remarkable achievements; surely a big boy like John could do as well as a girl if he only tried,

and so on. John's mother felt the same and also offered presents. The humiliation of these comparisons, the urge of his mother, together with the lure of the prizes, filled John with eagerness to do what his cousin was doing; he wanted the praise, he wanted the reward.

A further study of the boy convinced me that he was not consciously telling untruths. His imagination was abnormally excited by all these urges, and while that stimulation possessed him, he actually believed he had achieved what his mother had expected of him, and he had made his claims accordingly. Of course, he has never performed these tasks and feats; his mother and the influential Aunt Mary had not taken into consideration that Jennie was two years the older, and that the demands made of the boy were beyond his mental and physical capacity. But difficult as it may be for some of us to understand, John, in his imaginative conceptions, was telling the actual truth. All of Don Quixote's mighty exploits were very real to

that dream-filled gentleman; and we must remember that there are many Don Quixotes who are not crack-brained and who do not belong back in Cervantes' time; that in fact that quality of the great-deeded knight, which transformed an imagined scene into a reality, lives on in our children to-day.

At the same time, this constant repetition of transmuting an imagined deed into an actual achievement, which became a fixed habit with him, was bad for John in his childhood and promised dangerous consequences for the future. Though not yet a conscious liar, John was on the road to becoming one, — and an habitual one. I have treated the subject of lying and its causes in another chapter, but I may here remark, even though I repeat myself, that few things are more responsible for the development of lying and dishonesty in our children than the holding of children up to standards beyond their ability. Stimulating a child with promises, or shaming him, or exciting his jealous pride by statements of what other children have

accompliished — and doing this without a sober estimate of the child's real ability — is almost certain to impel the child to use dishonorable means to achieve the end toward which he has been incited.

In John's case the remedy was simple: the awakening of the mother to the actualities of the condition, the polite ignoring of the friendly advice of the aunt, the restoration of John to a basis where the work expected of him should correspond to his capacity.

There is the friend, usually a most sympathetic soul and frequently a devoted one, who is constantly fearful of all ills and accidents and is constantly uttering wise warnings. If we followed her, we would keep our children in beautiful cells and allow them to venture forth only with a bodyguard, front and rear, of nurses and governesses.

Some time ago a mother brought me her six-year-old daughter. She herself was in a despairing mood; she declared her child to be so restless, so irritable, so nervously excitable, and so rebellious that the child was

beyond her (the mother's) control. Examination of the child supported all the mother's statements; living with the girl must have been almost intolerable.

"And I don't see how Rosemary ever got into this state — when she used to be so happy," sighed the mother. "Heaven knows, I've tried to be so careful with her!"

That remark suggested a clue. I asked questions, and the answer led back to a day when a friend of the mother had called, — a very much admired friend, who had very positive opinions and who had no hesitancy in uttering them positively. During the visit this friend had expressed herself as follows:

"What, you mean to say you let Rosemary go into the street and the park on *roller skates!* I would not think of such a thing for any child, certainly not for my children. Skates are most dangerous! Why, only a little while ago I heard of a terrible accident. A little girl of six, just Rosemary's age, tried to cross the street on her skates, and a big touring car came along ——" The story

need hardly be finished, except that the visitor, in telling it, admitted that the little girl was most undisciplined and was nominally in charge of an ignorant and careless nursemaid.

Rosemary's mother went on to say that influenced by the powerful warning of her friend, she had taken Rosemary's skates away from her and had taken other measures to guard the child against accidents. The source of the trouble with Rosemary became obvious: the friend-advised mother, in removing all chances of accidents, had removed all chances of activity, and activity was exactly what the spirited Rosemary required to keep her in a condition of mental and nervous balance. My advice was as obvious as the cause of the child's disturbance: I advised the restoration of the skates and the other active pleasures, under adequate precautions.

Of course, I believe in giving every sane thought to safety, but better the possibility of accident than the certainty of the ill results

which followed a confined life such as was imposed upon Rosemary. Children must be instructed in the proper use of any plaything or implement which affords physical activity; the simplest object may become a source of serious danger if improperly or thoughtlessly used. But this positive-minded, advising friend who had put Rosemary's mother so sadly off the right track had based her vigorous condemnation of skates upon an accident in which the skates had played only the most incidental part. One might just as reasonably condemn beds, because so many people die in them.

To this class also belong the friends who come to us with advice and warning about every disease germ that science has discovered. They seem to have seen these germs, hungrily stalking the streets, and looked upon their malignant features: the friends who would not send children to school — never! — for fear of contagion; the friends who, motivated by this fear, advise against children being permitted to go anywhere, or

meet any one outside their little circle of friends and acquaintances. In brief, to this class belong all those friends who look upon life chiefly as a series of possible calamities, who remember and dwell chiefly upon life's dangers.

Now I do not wish to be understood as saying a word which could be interpreted as encouraging carelessness in the handling of our children. Indeed, on the contrary, I ask for the most thoughtful care, but with thoughtful care I ask for balanced judgment and common sense. We must realize that we cannot protect life by running away from it, by shutting either ourselves or our children off from it. We can best fit ourselves for life by actually living it, and we can fit our children for it only in the same way: by permitting them to face what are the present more or less natural conditions of life.

Again, in our pleasant intercourse with our friends, we are often influenced by conventional standards, by the thought of what the friend will think, by the fear of offend-

ing the friend, by the desire to have everything run smoothly before our friends. By such motives we are often influenced into placing social consideration for our friends above justice to and understanding of our children.

"And there's little Grace," said a visitor quite casually, as she entered the living room with Grace's mother. "How d'you do, Grace."

The six-year-old child, busy with her painting in one corner, glanced up. At sight of her mother's friend, her face took on a sullen look, and she resumed her work without responding.

"Grace, say 'how do you do' to Mrs. X.," the mother commanded. Again Grace did not respond. The mother repeated the command. Still Grace did not respond. Thereupon the mother came over to Grace, took hold of her shoulders, and directed that she walk straight over to Mrs. X. and say "how do you do."

"But I don't like Mrs. X.!" Grace exploded.

"Why, Grace, where are your manners?"

A scene followed which needs no description; and all through the bitter experience, through tears and agonizing screams, the little girl repeated the refrain, "Mother, I don't like Mrs. X.! I don't like Mrs. X.!" To be sure, on the surface, this was a very embarrassing situation for the mother. But the facts of the case, which I shall state, prove that the "friend" and the mother's attitude toward the friend, and not the child, were the causes of this distressing experience.

Mrs. X. is of the type who never thinks of a child as an individual human being entitled to personal feelings and personal pride. She has an artificial, superior manner with children; usually she does not notice them at all, and when she does, she talks down to them in a condescending, joking, teasing manner. Mrs. X. had a nickname for six-year-old Grace, "little cabbage-head," prob-

ably suggested by Grace's unruly, flaring hair. Grace has a very definite personality and a very sensitive soul. That nickname irritated the child very much, and she had asked her mother again and again to please tell Mrs. X. not to call her "little cabbage-head." The mother paid no attention to Grace's request. She thought it absurd for Grace to mind such little things and preposterous for her to make such demands. In so far as the mother did think of Grace's request at all, it was to think how she would hurt her friend by mentioning such a matter. She therefore had not the slightest inkling of what an outrage upon her pride Grace felt that nickname to be; and she had no inkling of what, because of that nickname, and because of her instinctive sense of Mrs. X.'s real indifference toward her, an irritating experience it was to Grace to meet Mrs. X. Therefore this scene (a scene all too common in its essentials!) was really generated by the friend and by the mother's attitude: a scene in which the child's crude, but very

real honesty, instead of being handled with appreciative understanding, was punished and degraded, — a sacrifice upon the altar of conventional friendship.

Conventional politeness — the consideration that is due a friend — how our children do suffer from these! We have promised a little pleasure trip to our child, to which she has been looking forward; we are just about to start, when a friend unexpectedly calls. "No, we were not going any place in particular — please sit down, and we'll have tea — and, Mary, go read that nice fairy story you started and like so much." Or we are actually out upon a treat which we have promised the child — perhaps headed for some place of interest on which the child's mind is set; perhaps on a shopping expedition we have planned to buy the child something he especially desires — and a friend stops us, a friend who very likely declares herself to be in a great hurry, yet stands talking interminably about a new hat or a new gown. Result: we stand listening—the little

child, grown impatient and restless, tugs at our hand and begs us to come on — whereupon our friend, whether she expresses her thought in words or looks, indicates her very definite opinion of that youngster who will give his mother no peace and who interrupts her own speech; and we, in deference to conventional politeness, suppress the child and continue talking.

I might continue indefinitely these instances — so trifling when taken singly, so all-important in their cumulative effect — of how conventional friendship is bowed down to, and how the well-being of our children is sacrificed.

Now how shall we proceed constructively to face this problem of friends, particularly of advising friends? What shall we do? What shall be our guiding consideration?

If we think the whole matter over with most scrupulous care, we shall perceive that the solution to the whole problem comes down to this fundamentally: that we must strive to know our children. If we know our

children, we will have a fairly good working conception of what is best for them and what is the best way of handling them. And, one step further, if we know this much, we will know when our friends' advice is foolish and can tactfully disregard it; if need be we can firmly oppose it; and if the advice is wise, we will also know it and can accept it with gratitude toward its giver.

Also in facing this problem frankly, we must recognize that we are as much at fault in this regard as our friends; but whereas we cannot handle the problem by altering our friends, we can in some degree handle it by altering and controlling ourselves. First, we must rid ourselves of the conventional ideas of what is due one's friends, of that fear of "What will Mrs. Blank think?" and for conventional ideas we must substitute, as our foremost consideration, the happiness and well-being of our children.

If this be our first consideration, and if we know our children, and if we have tact, many of the harmful ways in which our

friends thoughtlessly touch our children's lives can easily be avoided. Even so seemingly trivial a situation as a friend calling at a time that interferes with a child's eager expectations can easily be met in a manner so that no one is hurt or disappointed. "This is my afternoon with John, and we have planned a very special party," said graciously, with some slight elaboration or emphasis appropriate to the project, and with the manner of continuing immediately, will save the situation for the child and cannot possibly give offense to any sensible friend.

Some of our friends — if we really try to know them — we will realize we can ask frankly and directly to abstain from certain practices in regard to our children; and to them we can frankly explain the methods we have formulated for protecting our children from our friends. If these friends are sensible and open-minded, they will understand and be grateful. If they are foolish, they will probably be offended; their loss will be no true loss; it will really be a gain in that

what we chiefly lose will be their interference with our children.

A friend calling on Katherine's mother was very much hurt because the five-year-old child did not respond when the friend greeted her, and also was hurt because the mother did not compel the girl to be polite. But this mother was infinitely more thoughtful than the mother of Grace, to whom I have referred earlier in the chapter. She very gently showed Katherine out of the room, then turned to the friend. "I hope you'll overlook Katherine's not shaking hands with you, and my not insisting that she do so. But she is very shy and extremely sensitive. I fear I might injure her by trying to force her to respond to strangers. I think it wiser, in her particular case, to take the time to cultivate her social spirit slowly and carefully. I hope you understand." This friend did understand, as had the others to whom the mother had spoken with similar frankness.

And then again there are friends — we must always *know* our friends! — on whom

we should recognize that frankness will be wasted. These have narrow minds and arbitrary, unchangeable opinions, often based upon little or no experience. The only method with such, short of discarding them, is to listen to their suggestions and advice without answering or being drawn into a discussion.

It is possible to avoid some of the harmful effects of our friends by anticipating those effects, and by careful planning to have the child out of the way. For instance, Mrs. A. has an Uncle Joe, a kind, delightful, and most enthusiastic gentleman, who frequently made late afternoon calls during which he always indulged in a wild romp with his little nephew. His exuberant spirit, his lionesque play, invariably overstimulated the six-year-old Robert so that he had restless and often sleepless nights (as also in consequence did the mother), and was irritable the following day. The mother perceived that her son was of too nervous and excitable a temperament for such strenuous play immediately before

his bedtime; on the other hand, if she could avoid doing it, she did not wish to offend the sensitive but choleric bachelor uncle who understood nothing about children. She also perceived that it would be difficult, even if she did speak frankly to the uncle and he consented to more restrained behavior, for these two to meet without involuntarily lapsing into a high-spirited frolic. So, after considering the problem, she introduced a new programme for Robert: she made the period between five and the boy's bedtime a period of "quiet play," to be spent by the boy alone in his room with interesting floor games. Uncle Joe regards this new dispensation as a nonsensical fad, but he has accepted it as a piece of unchangeable routine; and when he wants a romp with Robert he comes before five.

I may mention here that there are many "Uncle Joes" among our friends; and that one of their characteristics which we must be prepared to face is their willingness to romp with a child so long as they are inter-

ested and their desire to stop the moment they have had enough. Naturally the excited child has not had enough and does not want to stop; he insists naggingly upon going on. Such uncles, provoked and presuming upon their intimacy, often criticize the child for its lack of self-control or us for our lack of disciplinary methods. We must have the courage to tell such uncles and friends, if it becomes necessary, that they and not the child are the direct cause of the child's uncontrolled and irritating behavior.

In what I have here written I do not wish it to be understood that I underrate in the least the high value of friends. I only ask that we see the problems that they frequently create and that we set about the correction of these problems. As a rule, if we proceed in the right manner, we will suffer no loss in friendship. But always consideration for our children must come first. And if our most thoughtful tact, and if our sympathetic understanding and handling of our friends

cannot prevent our friends from harmfully interfering with our children's lives, then only one course lies open to us. We must lose our friends and save our children.

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO BREAK THE RULES

IN the preceding chapters I have emphasized the importance of method, regularity, persistency, and definiteness in the handling of our children, and I will here reaffirm my belief in these ideas. But in this chapter I wish particularly to point out and dwell upon the limitations and dangers of these ideas if they are carried out regardless of how they serve the individual child's needs. To make the most of our children, to have them develop to the fullest of their capacities, we want to guard against allowing any method to become rigid, without capability of adjustment to the varying nature of the individual child; for the best method, followed literally and blindly, may become a menace. It is important to know

sound rules, yes; it is also important to know how and when to break them.

The danger that lies in formulating a method, a set of rules, and then permitting or requiring the child to grow up and fit into those prescribed rules is most clearly recognizable by most of us in the methods of our systematized education. A method of teaching a subject, or of handling pupils of a given age, is developed, becomes fixed and standardized. The child whose mental endowment is not very selective, who can adapt himself without inward revolt to a prescribed and confined course, falls into the classroom routine and becomes known as a good pupil; and the child with more marked individuality, whose mind calls for greater variety, more freedom to do things his own way and for himself, does not fit easily into the prescribed method and is likely to be regarded as a difficult pupil or even a failure.

An experience in a city school of a little boy of nine in his nature-study class is typical of many things that have come under

the observation of thinking mothers and honest-minded teachers. This boy's teacher was presenting her subject according to the method she had acquired in her normal college; it was classroom routine, conscientiously performed on her part. The boy seemed stupid, uninterested, irresponsive, and at the end of his first quarter in her class she gave him the lowest mark that would pass him. Then one day she took the class on an outing, and the stupid boy gave the teacher one of the surprises of her teaching career. He was full of life; he knew the name of every plant and tree; he knew the birds and their habits, and he talked freely and spiritedly of the nature life about him, — in brief, he showed that he knew more about nature, and loved it more, than any other child in the class. The teacher investigated the boy and learned that most of his life he had spent in the country, and that since infancy he had had a keen liking for all outdoor things. She was wise enough to see that her classroom procedure must have been

infinitely boring to this instinctive little naturalist. She at once set about to change her routine into a method which would appeal to that boy's living interest.

It is a commonplace observation of all of us that the school child who most easily adapts himself to school routine and is regarded as a prize pupil often sinks into mediocrity when his school days are over and is passed by a child who was regarded as of inferior mentality. Both of these children have suffered in some degree from a non-adjusting method. A similar — and perhaps greater — danger lies in any method of home training, however good, that has become a set of fixed rules.

Before going into this matter of regulations and rules, it may be well to remind ourselves that the chief medium of approach we have to the child during his earliest years is through the physical side of him, — his dressing, bathing, eating, sleeping, resting, playing. In other words, our dealings with the child during this period must, for the

most part, be through his commonplace experiences; therefore the rules and methods with which I shall deal in what follows will necessarily be rules and methods formulated for the guidance of the child's everyday life. And right here I wish to say, if I appear to speak of commonplace, insignificant details of the child's care, of details so slight in themselves that they seem hardly worth mentioning, it is because I realize deeply that it is almost always the insignificant details, which we are so apt to overlook, that cause the most serious upheavals in life. The big and obvious dangers gain our immediate attention, and we try to remedy them before damage can be done.

Perhaps no modern ideas as to the training of the child hold greater possibilities for his future development than those relating to his physical care. These modern ideas, conscientiously carried out, not only result in a better foundation of health, but the activities arising from this physical care can be made a means (as I have elsewhere pointed

out) of the child's preliminary education, — and incidentally a source of very great relief to the mother.

Yes, these rules are wonderful rules. But there is a big *if*. They are wonderful *if* we know also how to break, adapt, relax them.

Back of all these rules, founded upon them, is Regularity. We have made a god of regularity; it is a great god, and I also worship it. But I see the value of sometimes forgetting to worship and of doing something else.

For instance, there is the method of dressing the baby which most modern mothers follow almost religiously, — the essence of which method is a regularity of which the elements are that the baby shall be dressed quickly, with as little handling as possible, and according to a fixed routine. This is a most excellent method, — if only we know how to relax and even break it, according to the nature of the individual child. But the excellent routine, followed invariably and in all cases, may cause the baby to fret, cry, even struggle; and then attempts are per-

haps made to console or quiet the child by talk or making curious noises, which may only serve to irritate him further; and perhaps, after a time, the mother or nurse wonders why the baby is growing up into an irritable or nervous child.

Now this child may have too much energy to submit quietly to an excellent but unadapted routine. Perhaps one item of this method is for the baby to be dressed while held upon the lap, which may be excellent for many babies. If the baby cries and squirms, it may mean that the baby desires more space for the use of his growing muscles than is given by the traditionally correct lap. A mother of my acquaintance has a six-months-old girl, bubbling with the sheer joy of living, to whom an unchanged routine of dressing might have resulted in the perversion of the child's wonderfully joyous spirit. The mother, realizing this, altered the modern method prescribed for dressing to suit the case of her particular child. Instead of requiring the baby to lie quietly upon her

lap, the mother lays the baby on the bed, allows it freedom to turn and crawl, to kick its legs and wave its arms, while she watches her chance to deftly slip on its simple garments. Of course, this dressing a baby on the fly requires thought and judgment as well as patience, and it may appear to take more time; but in reality, with such a baby, it requires no more thought or time than adherence to a prescribed method. Result, a less worn mother, a very much happier baby.

Again there is the rule for feeding: regularity, correct formula and *quiet,* — a most excellent rule, particularly the prescription that there shall be no diversion while the child is being fed. If we try to entertain the child during its feeding period by talking, singing, playing, making confusing sounds, we know that we are overstimulating the child by fleeting impressions and sensations, and that food under the circumstances will interest him very little.

Yet, paradoxical as it may seem, there may

be cases in which one of these " don'ts " are the very things to do. For example, a mother of a seven-months-old boy found it impossible to feed him satisfactorily even though she observed most carefully the rule against diversion. Worried, she began to watch the child, to study him. She noted that every bit of color on her, even the red of her lips and the white of her teeth, caused the tiny hands to reach forward; she noted that every remote sound attracted his attention; constantly the child seemed alert to receive new impressions with ears and eyes. It became evident to the mother, after thinking it all over, that the child's desire to satisfy his visual and aural sensations was almost as great as his desire for food. She concluded that the way not to divert this child was to divert him with a single object. In carrying out this idea, she arranged to have at feeding time a single especially attractive object designed to satisfy the baby's pleasure in sound and color. Usually it was a colored wooden egg which opened into halves and

which the baby could hold in both hands and make a sound with, or a spool of colored cotton which he could unwind, or a piece of colored tissue paper which crackled. The result of this breaking of her rule was that the baby's attention was concentrated, and he took his bottle almost automatically.

Part of the foundation of any method, any set of rules, must be the recognition that the child, however young, has desires for new and different experiences. Even a very young infant tires of the same toy. Variety is with children, as with us elders, the spice of life. The little child craves to get away from the commonplace, from the usual. It wants variety, adventure; and we must learn to remember and appreciate this, and gratify it whenever possible, even though it may mean the overturning, for a brief period, of one of our most sacred rules.

Another rule that is among the best is that requiring the child to go to bed at a fixed hour every evening; and also it is another that may be most advantageously maintained

by occasionally breaking it. The following little incident may suggest how a child may be influenced by granting it the unexpected. All one day seven-year-old John had heard his grandmother's birthday party being discussed; it was to be held at night for the reason that her sons and many of the desired guests were unable to leave their business during the day. That evening, while at his supper, John remarked to his mother, "Mother, I would love to go to grandmother's party to-night."

That remark expressed only the child's longing; it was not a request or demand, for the child had not the slightest expectation of his desire's fulfillment. John had never stayed up later than seven, and except when traveling he had never been away from home after this hour. The mother, on her part, had had no thought of letting John go to the party. But this expressed desire coming from John in this unexpected way made a very distinct appeal to her. She thought about it seriously. She realized what a deep

affection and comradeship there was between John and his grandmother; she remembered that grandmother was a very old lady, that her birthdays were numbered; that for John to be present at one of them might mean an invaluable experience which would enrich his life. She knew that John had not even considered being taken to the party, and she also realized that none of his energy or emotions were wasted in anticipation of or preparation for such a party.

After a few minutes of quiet she turned to John, and said, "John, I know how much you love your grandmother, how much pleasure it will mean to you to go to her birthday party to-night; I will take you to it, but you understand that you are not old enough to stay very long. You can stay there just an hour, and when it is time to go, of course you will be ready."

John was in ecstasy. He agreed to the conditions absolutely. Without any admonition, John's behavior at the party was perfect. Fifteen minutes before it was time to

leave, the mother prepared him by telling him that he had fifteen minutes more, and when it was time to go, John in his most gracious manner bade his hosts and their guests good-by and with a heart full of joy went home and went to bed.

The result of this policy with John was most marked. His mother had practically no "obedience" problems with him; he was always ready to give up at her request what seemed to him pleasant things, for such experiences as the preceding had made him understand that his mother's rules were based upon love for him, and that she desired to please him whenever his pleasures were within her reach and were not injurious to him.

To encourage self-dependence in a child by allowing him to do things for himself that are within his strength is a most excellent rule. This giving a child responsibility in regard to the ordinary daily experiences of his life, bathing, dressing, eating and the like, is a most practical and constructive method of utilizing the child's energies and of help-

ing a little child gain control of his mind and body. But here is another of those rules that are likely to defeat their own purpose unless we recognize the rule's limitations.

"I cannot get Alfred to dress himself or take care of his things any longer," a mother reported to me. "He started well enough, but now I do everything to insist on his doing it, but I no longer get any results." Upon investigation, I found that this mother, like many mothers, had followed a method without following the child. The boy's parents had modern ideas, and from the time he began to have physical control of himself, they had stimulated him to do things for himself, regardless of the time the little tasks required. During his first few years his physical limitations prevented in some degree this method from becoming a menace to the child and the household; but at six he was supposed to do all ordinary things for himself, without aid. At about this period he began to develop that spirit of disobedience of which his mother complained. He would

not stop playing just yet, he would not bathe just yet, he would not eat just yet, he would not go to bed just yet, — this was Alfred's attitude toward most of the requests made of him.

A little further study of the child and of the manner in which he had been handled showed me that this situation, so puzzling and irritating to his parents, was but the natural outcome of their own demands, their following a good rule in too inelastic a way. The little boy had been required to complete every item of the schedule that had been arranged for him. Because of his limited strength and undeveloped skill, he had to do things slowly, which meant that he was tired and bored before he was through; and this caused him to linger over his tasks and then in turn to hate them. Being a spirited boy, the development of an explosive disobedience and rebellion was only natural.

The most important point in regard to teaching self-dependence by this method is not that a given task must be completed, but

that the task should be one that can be completed within a comparatively short period by the child's limited physical and mental abilities. There are times when it is wiser, however self-dependent and capable a little child is to look after himself, to spare his limited energy and do things for him, especially when a serious further task awaits him. For instance, in the morning before going to school, all possible energy should be saved the child, so that the morning should start easily and smoothly, and so that the child should be ready to give his best to his school work. To be sure, a certain amount should be expected of him in the morning, but a very limited amount so that it should not become a burden and therefore hateful to him.

Again, it is a part of our average advanced method that when a child urges upon us a preposterous whim or demand, we shall give it firm but kind refusal or non-consideration, and hold the child to what in our older wisdom we see as the right and proper way. But on occasions there may be a real service

to the child in giving consideration to his seemingly irrational requests. This little experience with an imaginative child of eight will illustrate, in a very small way, how the breaking of a rule intelligently can avoid a disastrous collision, and can bring peace and quiet and repose to the child, plus the experience of satisfying a legitimate adventurous desire. Grace was required to go to bed by seven and was usually sound asleep half an hour later. One night at nine o'clock her mother heard her restlessly tossing in her bed, every now and then saying something to herself. Finally the mother, somewhat provoked, came up to find out what was troubling Grace.

Grace sat up in bed and most defiantly declared, "I am mad! I am mad!"

The mother's first impulse, springing naturally out of her rule, was to order Grace very sharply to lie down and put her nonsense out of her head. But she repressed that impulse and asked very simply, "What are you mad about, Grace?"

"I want to sit up."

"Where do you want to sit?"

"I want to sit near the window."

"All right, Grace. How long shall we say — five or ten minutes?"

This reply surprised Grace and of itself it in some degree removed the child's restlessness; she had expected the very opposite from her mother. "Oh, mother," she cried almost breathlessly, "if I can *really* sit up for five minutes!"

Grace was put into her bathrobe and slippers and allowed to sit near the window, and the mother sat quietly behind her, wondering what was going on in the child's mind. Grace gazed intently out at the moon for several moments, and then in an awed voice she unconsciously explained.

"I just saw the moonlight coming through the window, mother, and I did *so* want to see the moon." After a pause: "I wish we had the whole moon all the time. Mother, where is the moon when we don't see it?"

The mother responded quietly, simply, briefly to Grace's questions.

"Oh, mother, I love you so much!" Grace suddenly stood up, threw her arms about her mother's neck, and kissed her again and again.

When the five minutes were over, the mother asked Grace whether she were ready, and Grace, with satisfied spirit, went quickly to bed and was asleep within a few minutes. Had this mother been an unchanging worshipper of her own rule, this little episode would have turned into a tragedy for the child, might have contributed to a rebellious misunderstanding instead of being an experience that brought child and mother closer together.

Some of the most valuable qualities in our children, originality, initiative, spontaneity, enthusiasm, may be suppressed, stunted in their growth, even practically destroyed, by a too rigid adherence to ways that we consider best. And in addition to this injury to the child, a method so followed may strain

to the breaking point the relations between the child and the parent by engendering antagonism and rebellion where there should be a spirit and attitude of grateful response.

We want our children to have the efficiency that comes from the application of a method; yet we must avoid the dangerous tendency that exists in any method to make our children all alike, the mere duplications of the same mold. Even the wisest of us do not invariably know our children, do not really know just what they are. The child will always be in some measure a mystery to us. Perhaps only by relaxing our methods, even discarding them on occasions, can we induce the true nature of the child freely to reveal itself. And when, through such relaxation of rules, there has been revealed to us some new trait or tendency in the child, we must hold ourselves willing to admit misconceptions and miscalculations and be willing to change our method. The proper training of our children must be a state of constant readjustment; our rules and methods must be

ever altering and growing. The essence — though not the letter — of any good modern rule (even though we have adopted it after most careful thinking) is that it must not be regarded as the perfect, the ultimate method.

All of which brings us back to what I have so often said, and cannot say too often, — that before all else we must seek to *know our children.* Only when we *know them* can we apply a method with intelligence and without a fear that the method we are putting upon our child is in the nature of a rigid, ready-made shoe intended for a foot of different size and shape.

Our methods should be made to order for each individual child, and each child's nature should be carefully studied, examined, measured before his own set of rules is prepared. And every so often he should be studied, examined, measured all over again; then and then only will methods and rules serve and not enslave our children.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN PARENTS ARE VICES

"MOTHER," "Mother Love," "The Hand that Rocks the Cradle,"—these have been extolled so long in story, play, motion pictures and song that the idea of motherhood, and all pertaining to it, is sentimentally sacrosanct. Any criticism is a thing to be horrified at: more terrible than lese majesty in the old days or treason in our own time. It is an affront to an idea which tradition and sentiment and the popular song-writers and the more popular movies have invested with unassailable perfection.

But despite these builders of a nation's sentiment, I must speak the truth: and the plain unsentimental truth is that many of our song-worshipped mothers, and many of our fathers, should on the record of their deeds be classified as vices.

I am not here considering or addressing myself to those parents who obviously, to every thinking person, are vicious influences in their children's lives: parents who are frivolous, negligent, who take more interest in their own pleasure than in their children's welfare. I am here concerned only in the worthwhile parents who are earnestly desirous of doing their best for their children; and my concern is to show such parents how, perhaps in ignorance of child nature and of better methods, they are unconsciously guilty of attitudes and practices that bring vicious results.

The vices of well-intentioned parents spring from many sources. There is of course ignorance. But many of these sources are good instincts which have become perverted. There is pride: pride in the child itself, our desire that it shall be recognized as the perfect child, our desire that we shall be recognized as the perfect parent. There is the vice of ill-considered devotion; the senseless sense of propriety; the false idea of good

behavior. And I might go on indefinitely cataloguing bad standards and bad practices which are the perversion of good impulses. But the fact that the original instinct was good cannot alter the vicious effects of the practice and does not mend the injury which has been done the child.

Perhaps few of us have ever realized how many of our vices have their origin in our pride as parents, — pride which has a hundred forms. Our pride may excite in us a mad desire to have our child excel beyond his merit and beyond his ability, which desire may be a vice when regarded from the viewpoint of its results. Perhaps no instance will serve to illustrate more poignantly the fallacies of our misconceived ambitions for our children than the case of Rosemary.

Rosemary's parents were determined that she should be regarded as an exceptional child, and they had the money to make her that in so far as the mere spending of money can achieve this result. Until the age of eleven Rosemary was coddled in all material

luxury. She was tutored at home in school work and in many branches of art. She was taken to all kinds of amusements. And above all other attentions, everything was thought out for her, everything was done for her. But despite all the care and thought and love and money bestowed upon her, Rosemary was physically weak, pale, listless and very slow in all her responses. Finally the little girl herself begged to be sent to school, and after much pleading the devoted mother consented.

To get away from that airless hothouse, her golden cage with its velvet lining, proved exactly what Rosemary needed. School seemed like a paradise of freedom to her; she was allowed to do some things by herself and for herself. It stimulated her imagination, her creative ability, her ambition. At the end of a few months Rosemary was reborn, — bubbling with life, happy, active, joyous.

After a time Rosemary decided to dramatize one of the stories read in school and de-

cided to give the play as a surprise to her mother and father on her birthday which was a few weeks off. The thought of doing it all herself, making the costumes out of colored tissue paper, assigning the parts to her friends, rehearsing them, thrilled her with joy. For three whole days she and her two little friends who were to have leading parts in the drama managed to keep this wonderful dream a secret. On the fourth day, Rosemary's mother happened in upon them and discovered the plan. Following her usual practice with Rosemary, the mother immediately stepped into the affair and took charge of the production. She improved the play with her revisions, and from her trunks brought forth most attractive costumes for the various parts, which shamed Rosemary's poor tissue garments. She assumed responsibility over the rehearsals, supervised and directed them; and instead of allowing the event to remain a small informal party as Rosemary planned it to be, the mother in-

vited a score of friends and decorated the house elaborately for the occasion.

As the mother saw it, the programme was a great success. The audience showed its appreciation by enthusiastic applause, and at the end of the play the guests crowded about the mother to congratulate her on her remarkable daughter. The mother was aglow with excited happiness. After she had bid the last guest good-by at the front door she rushed back to the theaterized living room to take Rosemary into her arms. But Rosemary was not there. After much searching, the mother found Rosemary in her own room, stretched out on her bed, her face buried in the pillow.

"Darling," the mother called to her, "wasn't your play wonderful!"

Rosemary lifted herself slowly from her bed, looked up at her mother with a strange, fierce look in her eyes and in wild hysteria she cried, "Mother, *you* did it all — not I!"

And so an experience which might have expressed childhood in all its genuine sim-

plicity and naïve beauty, an experience which should have proven the fruition of the child's own efforts, and which might have been the quickening of Rosemary's independent growth, was made into a crushing tragedy by a loving, devoted, ambitious mother. And to this day the mother does not understand her own guilt or the true cause of Rosemary's behavior. When she related the story her facts were practically the same as I have given; but this was her decisive conclusion and complacent interpretation:

" It was a plain case of hysterical exhaustion. I had let her do too much. Of course, after such an experience I'm not allowing Rosemary to attempt any trying work again. "

I think that every reader who understands children will join in exclaiming, " Poor Rosemary! "

The vice of Rosemary's mother was that, in her pride and love, she did everything for Rosemary. Some good parents go to the other extreme. There are few vices of par-

ents which deserve more censure than establishing a too exalted standard, sometimes an adult standard, as a model for the child's achievement. We cannot expect children to live up to our adult physical strength and intellectual power. We must realize that the crudity and imperfection of the little child's work is truly representative of the limited powers of the growing child, and in its way that work is as nearly one hundred per cent of possible achievement as our smooth and perfected performance. We parents, in our efforts to make the little child do something which is entirely beyond him, discourage his efforts by over-burdening him, and the result is often death to the child's ambition and misery to his soul. Life is filled with the tragedies of child phenomenons, pressed forward by proud parents, who wither and lose all their promise at just the time when they should be barely opening their buds.

Pride in our children is a wonderful quality; but when there is not combined with pride a full understanding of the child, and

sympathy for the child, then such a pride may become one of the worst of vices. At the very least our pride demands that our children should be the equals of children of the same size and age. The way in which we handle a physical condition may serve to illustrate the possible vicious effects upon our children of this kind of pride. Most of us good parents consider neither expense nor effort in securing the best medical attention for our children; yet few of us seem to appreciate adequately that if a child suffers physically, all his bodily and mental functioning is affected; that all of him, not alone his physical body, needs special attention and consideration. The case of Olga is an extreme example to illustrate this point.

At seventeen Olga weighed over one hundred and eighty pounds. She had long been a problem to her parents. At the age of six Olga looked like a child of ten, and it was at that time that the parents consulted a specialist and discovered that Olga was suffering from an abnormal gland condition which

caused this obesity and other physical disorders. The parents kept her under the care of this specialist, and while she is still an abnormality as to size and weight, she is nevertheless in excellent physical condition. But the parents' pride made them ashamed of her size. While the best of physical attention was being given to Olga, the other chief concern of the parents during these years was to save themselves the embarrassment of having so huge a child in a class with children hardly more than half her size, — this regardless of the fact that she was no older than the average of the class. Their whole thought was, "What will other people think?"

Consequently they engaged private tutors for Olga in an effort to speed her up in her studies so that she would be in school with and mingle with children of her own size. Olga, however, had just the average mentality of her years, and naturally enough she found it difficult to concentrate on her advanced studies. She responded rather poorly

to the forcing process of tutors. Olga's unsatisfactory progress was not understood by her parents. They saw it as her fault; she was lazy and did not want to learn; that was the parents' verdict, and they had her pushed harder than ever. They did not realize that Olga had not had a real chance to gain a mastery of the fundamentals of any of her subjects, that everything was chaos and confusion to her. Their pride or shame (sometimes the two are one) drove them on; and regardless of whether she was fitted for the classes or knew her work, she was dragged through the primary grades (tutors always forcibly feeding her), through two years of high school, and finally by her tutors having luckily fed her just the right stuff before the entrance examinations, she was entered in a special preparatory school for college.

At this school, Olga, for the first time dependent upon her own efforts, found herself absolutely at sea. She was deficient in every subject and could not keep up with her class. At home (the school was located in her home

city) while the best physical care still was given her, the child received no sympathy for her poor standing in her school work. Her father especially could not understand her poor reports when she had been given so much outside help. As the school year progressed, Olga found herself falling further and further behind in her work. She had no person to whom to turn for help and sympathy. She struggled to hold her place in school; and to achieve this apparent end she began to practice all kinds of deception. Finding that even this could not hold her a place in her class, and fearing the consequences at home of an open disgrace, in her desperation she wrote on a typewriter a letter to the authorities of the school upon her father's business stationery, forged her father's signature, asking to be excused from school attendance for the rest of the school year on account of illness.

This letter was accepted as a genuine document and Olga stayed out of school four months without her parents' knowledge,

leaving the house at the customary half-past eight each morning and returning at the customary four in the afternoon. At the beginning of the new year Olga came to her father, telling him she had failed in two subjects and therefore had to make up that work before she could enter the second year. This did not sound altogether clear to the father, and he decided to find out from the school direct the facts regarding his daughter's situation. Only then did he learn of his daughter's absence from school, and only then did the school learn of the forgery. There was a tremendous scene, which has nothing to do with the point I wish to make; it is sufficient to state that the father was dumfounded and furious, and that the school, seeing only the crime which Olga had committed and refusing to see its cause, refused to take her back under any circumstances at any time. And yet, if we are to be just, we must see that Olga was fundamentally no worse than the innocent and long-suffering victim of her parents' senseless vanity.

The case has this bit of brightness to it. The crisis which the forgery led to opened the eyes of the parents to the truth. Pride is conquered, and they understand Olga's case; and at last, at eighteen, she is beginning to receive the treatment she should have had all these eighteen years.

It may be of some value to parents whose children are in any way sources of embarrassment to know that Olga is fundamentally of a very fine nature. In contrast to her reprehensible conduct at school, she is naturally honorable, sensitive, thoughtful and delightfully sympathetic. What Olga had needed was as much attention to the care of her mental and emotional life as had been given to her physical life. If the parents had really considered Olga and not themselves, they would have known that this child at the age of six, looking twice her age, should not have been a member of a large class where she was always the center of the children's stares, the subject of their talk, and the object of twitting torment. Even her teachers did

not always remember that, though large, she was as young in age as the others; as a result they sometimes expected more of her than of the other children. All these irritations and demands of her school environment, plus her developed shame at her great size, served to make her abnormally self-conscious, sensitive, suspicious; she saw every one as against her, or ready to make fun of her. These unsympathetic circumstances forced her to center her entire mind upon herself, and she had no mind left to concentrate upon her studies. Olga is making rapid progress under the special training she now receives, but the effects of the years of suffering and retardation can never be wholly eradicated, and the years she has lost can never be wholly restored to her.

We parents cannot bear to have our children criticized by others, to hear that they are in any sense imperfect. The result too frequently is that we, by covering our child's errors, defending his misdeeds and explaining away his shortcomings, are guilty of cul-

tivating and nourishing our child's faults. We feel that this attitude in resenting unpleasant truths about our children is prompted by our love for them. As a parent I know this is only a small part of the truth. We defend, explain, gloss over our child's faults because of our own personal pride, because of our deep-rooted vanity and our senseless sense of propriety. Our child's faults, if they are admitted, reflect our faults; we therefore plainly don't like the faults to be seen. We do not perceive that what we mean to be a kindness from our heart to serve and shield our child is more than likely to turn out to be deforming treatment of him. Thus unknowingly we practice vices, and in the end our child must pay the penalty, — sometimes a heart-breaking penalty.

Our business as parents should be honestly to face the truth that our little child is not a completed human being but a human being in the making. We must recognize with utter frankness that the human being at birth has only primitive instincts, ready to be the un-

thinking instrument of the most powerful of them all, the desire for having his own way to serve his own selfish ends. These primitive instincts were doubtless essential in the early history of man, when civilized society did not exist to restrain these instincts and render them unnecessary, when one's livelihood was the chief concern of life, when selfishness for the individual or the group was almost imperative, and when the ethics of existence were based on the survival of the fittest. In our modern society where our neighbors must be considered, where we fare best when all are faring well, we no longer can claim any need of our primitive instincts for the purpose of seizing property, of killing and conquering. But we must recognize that the young child does possess many of these qualities that belonged to the human race in its youth. We must so discipline, cultivate and develop our children's primitive instincts that they may serve the child without interfering with the rights of others; more than that, so that they may also become forces for the

child's own well-being and hence be of greater service to others. Unless these primitive instincts and forces are controlled and directed into constructive channels, they degenerate into perverted habits.

But there are many instances where the parents do not recognize this truth; or recognizing it, do not practice it; and indeed there are some parents who still believe in encouraging these selfish instincts that may have had a real use in that far time when the race was young. Such attitudes are consciously or unconsciously vicious; and sooner or later the child pays the penalty for his parents' vices, and more than likely the parents suffer from their own wrong ideas and deeds.

Here is one concrete instance where just such an attitude of the parents toward their child's primitive instincts played havoc in the development of the child. One day while on the beach, at a place where I was taking my vacation, I saw a boy of twelve, a splendid specimen physically — powerful, nimble, with perfect control of his body — playing

with a boy of eight who was under-developed and in fact the very opposite physically of the older child. I was seated at a sufficient distance from these children not to be apparently an observer of them, but near enough to study and closely observe their play. The older boy, John, was finding boundless joy in rolling the younger boy over the beach as he might have rolled an empty barrel. When he had exhausted the fun of this game, he proceeded to drag the younger boy by the legs along the beach. Finally John picked up a shovel and began to pile wet sand on top of the younger boy. I heard the little boy say, "No more; no more!" But the older boy, in joyous satisfaction, kept piling the sand on top of the other until I could barely see his slight body and could barely hear his voice.

It is my rule never to interfere with the children of other people unless I am consulted; except, of course, in emergencies. I had watched this procedure, hoping all the time that John would respond to the little

boy's pleas. But they made no impression on John, and by this time I knew his victim was suffering and was helpless. I walked over to the older boy and in a very quiet way suggested that he stop piling on the sand, that perhaps it was too hard on the little boy to have all that sand on top of him. Near where this living burial was taking place, I had noticed John's parents seated with a group of friends. While I was talking to John, his mother rose and crossed to me, and with a polite but significant smile which definitely expressed her displeasure with me for my interference, told me that John, her son, always played with the smaller boy in such a way, that the younger boy liked it. I frankly replied that even if the little boy did apparently seem to enjoy the pummelling from John (which judging from his complaints I knew he did not) it was a great injustice to John to allow his physical strength to be turned loose on such depraved and depraving activities. The mother made all possible excuses for this cruelty on her child's part,

defending it on the grounds that the younger boy loved rough games, that such play developed a hardy manliness, and that she could not see that there was anything wrong in it.

I knew at the time that the mother was speaking only with mechanical lips, that she was entirely too intelligent a woman not to see my point and not to let it sink in. I therefore was not surprised when two years later that same mother came to me for advice. She told me that the instance on the beach had marked an awakening on her part to the realities of her child's character. "What can I do?" she begged, with her heart now on her lips, "to check the utter cruelty, the thoughtlessness, the selfishness of my child?"

Then the truth came out: a story of the part the parents had played in brutalizing John. The father had been the main influence in this development. He was one of those persons who have the philosophy that might makes right, and that what you can

take and hold is yours. John was an only child. The mother — an intelligent, quiet, sensitive person — was completely overshadowed by the forceful, dominant husband and father. He was a tireless business man; he had made a success of his life through endless energy, driving power, absolute determination to bend others to his will and pleasure. He was proud of his success won through sheer dominance, and he determined that his boy should have his spirit and his methods.

From the boy's earliest years he had encouraged little John to come out on top. But unfortunately he had not always been watchful and careful of the methods John employed in order to come out on top; and, furthermore, the father, with his primitive philosophy, was hardly a judge of the methods best suited to develop the qualities which win the highest success in the twentieth century. John had always been made much of; his victories were the delight and pride of his father's leisure. His cruelties were looked

upon as childish pranks and evidence of growing, virile spirit. All this approval stimulated little John to continue to gain more victories for himself; and he soon discovered the great truth that it is much easier to make conquests and to dominate when one's opponent or playfellow is weaker than oneself.

Such were the ideas behind the boy's training. The John I had seen burying the younger boy on the beach was just a natural product of his proud father's vicious ideas. But now the parents are gathering the painful fruit of these ideas, and John is also gathering them. The mother confessed that since John had been going to school, the teachers had always complained of his conduct. Parents of the other children in the class had made special requests not to have their children seated near John. John was now never invited to play games; he had no sense of honor or sportsmanship because he had never played with his equals, always with the weaker and younger, whom he could bully

and easily conquer. The training which was to have made him admired, a little king surrounded by a little admiring court, has made him disliked and avoided when possible. John started with splendid forces; he might have been an unusual boy with his powers controlled and directed toward his greatest good. Instead, John at fourteen is a wild animal. He is to-day a most difficult problem, where we are trying to undo the results of fourteen years of a parent's vicious promptings. John may come out well in the end because of his undeniable good natural qualities, — but nevertheless he is a most difficult problem. And the pity of it is, that John should never have been a problem at all.

To you parents who thus far have found yourselves guiltless of any of the vices I have enumerated, I ask you to read carefully what follows and see whether in word or in thought you are still without guilt.

Parents are vices when they force their adult sense of pleasure of an experience, or their idea of what is good for a child, upon

the young child without giving the child a chance to test that pleasure through his own experience. The result of such an act might turn what could have been a joyous experience in the child's life into a nightmare, an agony. The parent, for example, who forcibly submerges a little child in the water at a beach instead of allowing the little one gradually to learn that the big open space of water is safe and cool, is in my opinion guilty of a criminal offense. "Throw a child in the water and he'll swim out." That too widely accepted maxim is an untruth. Few children learn to swim from such teaching, and learn mighty few other more important activities from this method.

Parents are vices when they have one set of manners for their servants, or for home life, and other for company. I know a little girl, a perfect lady with me, a perfect little devil in the kitchen. It is clear to see that she behaves in miniature like the lady of the house. This double code of manners leads to deception and hypocrisy in children. Good

manners, like good health, come from practicing good habits daily.

Parents are vices when they are impatient over their child's slow performances. Rather than allow a few minutes longer for the tiny fingers to perform a task and thus acquire skill and swiftness, mothers will snatch the task out of the child's hands, do it for them quickly, admonish them for their slowness. And these very parents complain and wonder why Mary and John, when grown, cannot do and have no desire to do things for themselves.

Parents are vices when they chide, speak lightly of, poke fun at the attraction of the opposite sex among little children. Just such parents are responsible for sowing the first pernicious ideas of sex relationship. It should be the most normal and natural thing in the world for boys and girls of all ages to play together. The life force which motivates every act in the adult is behind the child's life as well. Nothing is of greater importance than to recognize that the little

child from the earliest day of his existence has an emotional life and that it is our business, our supreme obligation, to provide natural, normal, joyous outlets for it. Every child from his earliest days should be given an opportunity to work in color, to hear music and to have variety in his experiences. All these provide adventure. Here is the beginning of constructive outlets for the emotional force and there is no chance of its becoming an inverted and perverted expression.

Before we try to correct our child's faults we must try to understand what is behind the faults: irritability, nervousness and restlessness may be merely symptoms of a deep-rooted trouble in our child. We must guard against handling the symptom instead of curing the disease. In correcting a child we parents must not make too many criticisms. Make one correction at a time, and that at the psychological moment when the child is ready to receive it. This will bring greater

results than constant nagging and reprimanding.

If we parents wish to keep from being vices, we must not make an unalterable mold of our method of handling our child, no matter how splendid the method is. We must at all times remember that the child is not a fixed substance; that he, like ourselves, is an ever-changing, ever-growing organism, and we must make the method fit his needs.

In conclusion, I wish to say that we parents have the greatest chance in the world to serve our children and by serving our children to build a better and stronger human race. There is no work in the world that is more exacting, more demanding, than the work of being successful parents. If we would not be vices—would not be unconscious forces for the hampering or suppressing of our children's mental and spiritual growth—then we parents must realize that to be equal to meet our obligations we must be equipped for them physically, mentally and spiritually. Our first business as parents

should be to realize that our love must be fortified with knowledge of the nature of our child before our love can contribute toward his development. From the earliest days of our child's life we must learn to study and observe him before we begin to mold him; and one of our first tasks is to learn to sit back and watch our child in action, — give him a chance to experiment before we put down the law as to what he can do and what he cannot do. Let us study the nature of our child: is he shy? — is he responsive? — does he offer resistance? We must try to learn *who* is this new spirit that lives within the figure of our child. We must treat our child's troubles and joys seriously. We must at all times be honest and direct and simple with our children, and always open-minded and humble. With such an attitude toward our children, any vicious practice automatically disappears, and ours is the joyous satisfaction of knowing that we are doing all we possibly can to develop our children into the

best that it is in them to be. To develop a child into approximately one hundred per cent of his potentialities, — that is the finest task and the highest reward of parenthood.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW RICHES OF PLAY

DO you think I am paying too much attention to her toys?" the lavish mother of Joyce asked intently.

"No — I think you are paying altogether too little attention to her toys," I replied.

The mother of Joyce was astounded at my answer; just why I think the reader will understand, when later on he reaches the story of Joyce. But what I said to this eager, apprehensive mother I can say to almost all parents: you are paying too little attention to your children's play and their toys. You do not appreciate their full potential value; for most toys and playthings are bought with the parents thinking chiefly of the pleasure the gifts will bring.

That is not half their value. Not if they are the right sort of playthings. I would add

every bit of pleasure-giving value of play to children's lives that was in my power. But this pleasure, and the opportunities afforded by toys and games for physical development, — these are values so widely accepted that they require no additional words from me. But the other value, the new riches, of play and playthings is barely recognized and far too infrequently used. Play as a character builder, as an assistant in education, as a wholesome stimulant of the child's best qualities, — these are the potential riches that Joyce's mother had given no attention to and which most of us have overlooked. And these constructive riches exist in play without detracting at all from its pleasurable qualities.

Too many of us seem to think that any kind of game or toy that will amuse the child is adequate. We do not seek the plaything that will suit the child's nature, that will stimulate and feed his awakening powers. This lack of understanding of toy-value is found almost equally among parents who

have but a few pennies to spare upon playthings and those who spend thousands of dollars. And the child pays the penalty for this lack of knowledge.

An extreme example of how these riches were missed and the child made to suffer is the case of Joyce, who was nine when I first knew her. Her mother came to me and summarized her daughter despairingly. "Joyce is nervous, hysterical, disorderly, listless, at times has terrible outbursts of temper. And yet we give her everything a child's heart should want!"

I went out to Joyce's home in a beautiful spot of Long Island. The house was luxuriously furnished in excellent taste; the grounds amid which the house stood were in effect a private park of close to ten acres. On the south side of the house was a terrace of exquisite velvety green grass. On the west side of the house was an Italian garden, aflame with a wealth of flowers of every variety, and beyond this other gardens. And here in this heaven of bliss, where every de-

tail on the inside and on the outside bespoke thought and endless care and limitless expenditure, was Joyce, — pale, helplessly confused, nervously exhausted, and emotionally twisted, and two parents tense and worn with the child's perplexities.

After luncheon, the mother showed me through the house; every room was perfectly appointed in all details as to the adults' need. When I came to Joyce's room I found a pink rug on the floor; a bed covered with lace; a closet packed full of clothes, and a bureau filled with countless undergarments.

"And where are Joyce's play materials?" I asked.

I was led to a large closet adjoining Joyce's room, and there in a heap was a hopeless mess: elaborately furnished playhouses, electric stoves, thirteen dolls, dolls' trunks full of clothes, animals of every variety, toy bureaus, tables and chairs; every kind of mechanical toy. Here apparently was everything that a toy store had to offer, and everything that a fond mother with unlimited

money could provide. It was while we stood amid this prodigality of playthings that Joyce's mother asked me the eager question which I quoted at the beginning of this article.

"But," cried the astonished mother, "you see that even these she does not appreciate! She doesn't take care of them, parts of them she is continually losing; and her sweaters, hats, rubbers — always her governess has to pick them up!"

The cause of Joyce's tragedy was obvious, and I frankly told the parents the facts. Here was a little girl originally possessed of normal desires for activity and self-expression, all of which were crushed by the practice of the generous, well-meaning, but non-understanding parents thrusting upon her rapidly and indiscriminately one plaything after another. For years life had been confusion that must have been a nightmare to any sensitive child. No single toy or game had meaning or use to her. She was like a blind person put into a warehouse crowded with

furniture, who was bruised by some sharp corner every time he moved and could not find the door leading out of it. Life to her was perpetual chaos, one perpetual losing of things and the automatic replacement of them. The problem with Joyce was that all her life things had been done for her, and she had been surrounded with implements of pleasure; but no recognition had been taken of the fact that her own powers — physical, mental and emotional — needed an outlet, and because they had no outlet they became inverted, perverted habits.

What this child needed and what was done for her may suggest to other parents (and it can be done just as effectively upon a far less elaborate scale) how to prevent a similar tragedy with their own child, and it may show what a power play can be in a child's life if it is made meaningful. I concentrated on the importance of establishing a constructive environment for the child and introducing all kinds of activities in her life.

My first step was to stimulate Joyce's in-

terest in various manual activities, to arouse her curiosity, her initiative, fire her imagination, — all of which would stimulate her confused mind and emotions and give them constructive outlets. Joyce learned to use raffia; she made napkins, baskets and picture frames out of raffia and reed. She wove mats of different colored worsted. She learned to make her own dolls' clothes. She was stimulated to take an interest in drawing and painting; she made her own Christmas and birthday cards; she modelled in clay and plasticene; the introduction of a hammer, nails, woods and saw stimulated her to create furniture for her dolls. Joyce was interested in outdoor games, and arrangements were made to have the children from the neighborhood come as often as possible to share in the games. Outside of her few school hours her life was filled with meaningful play. New materials were supplied as she needed them, and variety was introduced as often as possible; sometimes it was a picnic in the woods to collect what she could, sometimes an in-

formal story was acted out without much preparation and with tissue-paper costumes.

Joyce's room was re-equipped simply, so that it would help to bring her peace and harmony. The gorgeous wall paper, which was topped with a frieze of figures from the nursery world, I had changed to a solid background of a golden tan; the bluebird furniture I had painted all over an ivory white, like the woodwork in the room. The animal curtains of French linen and the lace bedspread were exchanged for curtains and bed cover of unbleached muslin with a simple wide hem finished in a running stitch of blue worsted. A practical rug of a nice warm blue was put on the hardwood floor. There was designed especially a bookcase with a variety of divisions in it to hold such books, play materials, work materials and toys as were essential to the child's development, and these were arranged so that everything was accessible to her. There also was designed a simple low desk for two, with the thought that she might share her room whenever

possible with a little friend. The desk also had accessible shelves for the child's writing and painting materials. Out of the mess of toys in the storeroom a few perfect ones were rescued which could be used to the little girl's advantage, and the rest were literally thrown away (I make it a point never to give to any child imperfect playthings). Of all the dolls, two were found in perfect health; their simplest clothes were arranged, and the two of them were placed in Joyce's new world at a little tea table on which there was a doll's tea set.

All these arrangements of her room were made while the little girl was away on a short visit. I felt that for Joyce to get the contrast of her new room by seeing it for the first time, complete in its arrangement, would prove of greater value to her than if she had been there while it was being changed. Everything was ready in every detail, even to the sharpened pencils on the desk, when Joyce returned and was called into the room.

Her father and mother were there, and the mother simply turned to Joyce and said:

"Joyce, this is *your* room."

For a moment she seemed speechless, and then she threw her arms around both parents and wept and wept. From that time on until to-day (it is now several years since the beginning of this experience) Joyce has considered her room a sacred shrine, and her whole life has been completely turned around. She has learned the value and the meaning of each thing in her room, because each thing holds interest for her and she is able to make use of them all. She has learned to keep her things in order, everything in its place, because there now is a place for everything, and because it has become the pride of her life to do that.

To the parents it seems as if a miracle had happened. There was no miracle; it was just making use of the opportunities, the riches, which play with the right kind of play materials holds for every child. It was merely allowing Joyce's natural energies to flow out

in creative expression which brought her life and light, leaving none to be turned into perverted channels.

The best riches of play come when the child enriches himself, when his satisfaction and pleasure arise from what he creates out of ordinary materials; the returns here are greater than those depending upon the richness of the ready-made plaything. The child who from his earliest years is supplied with numberless elaborate manufactured toys is likely to get little real joyous development out of them. This profusion of ready-made toys, like a profuse diet of rich pre-digested food, is likely to give him neither strength nor satisfaction.

Here is an illustration of what can be made with the most commonplace materials, of the riches in them, and of the joy of creation and the self-development that may come from the use of such materials. Six-year-old Jane wanted a doll's house; particularly did she want an elaborate, brightly painted house, in fact almost a doll's mansion, which she

had seen alluringly displayed in a shop window. But Jane's mother had recently awakened to the significant fact that Jane soon wearied of her toys, that they had no meaning to her, that after their brief vogue with the little girl the successive toys were brushed carelessly out of Jane's life. So the mother now told Jane that she wanted her to have a new doll's house, but wouldn't it be much more fun to have a house that Jane had built all by herself? Wouldn't her dolls like her better for giving them such a house?

Jane readily agreed, for she had a quick imagination. The raw materials were collected: some from the toy-shop, some from the storeroom, some even from rubbish that would have gone to start the kitchen fire. The framework of the house was an ordinary lemon box, with the usual partition dividing it into halves. Stood upon its end, this box became a house of two stories, a large room on each floor, with of course one side open as in the case of a theatrical stage.

Jane had some manual dexterity, the rough

beginnings of a sense of art — both of which qualities most children have — and she set eagerly to work. On the outside she pasted a rough dull-gray paper, giving the effect of an exterior finish of stucco; the interior she covered with paper of cream-white. With crayon she marked off imaginary doors and windows, and at these she hung curtains which she herself had made. She nailed together blocks and strips of wood (manufactured for just such purposes) to make crude chairs, beds, a table, a bureau. She wove rugs for the floors. The pictures on the walls she made herself and cut frames for them from thick dark paper. Into the lower floor, which was both kitchen and dining room, she introduced a tin kitchen stove which she already possessed; and from her miscellany of discarded playthings she made other careful selections of house furnishings. She installed two or three of her store dolls as occupants and completed the family with two dolls she made from clothespins. From the start these last two have been her favorites,

and she never tires of making them new clothes of colored tissue paper.

For two years now this doll-house has been first in Jane's affection over all her other indoor playthings. Bit by bit she is constantly making new alterations, additions — "developing the estate" — just as you or I might seek to improve our own homes. And out of this crude house she has had a hundred times the pleasure she could have secured from that ostentatious ready-made mansion which she first desired; for this house is a thing which she created and to which she keeps on adding creative touches. And besides giving her this greater joy, it has developed her sense of order, her sense of the value of her own and other persons' belongings, and has stimulated in her the desire and ability to do things for herself.

There is no better way of making a school subject which may be a painful experience into a pleasure-giving experience than through the medium of a toy or game. For a time, nothing but complaints came from

school about Jack's conduct. He was not interested in his studies, was especially stupid in geography, and played truant every time he could. Punishments and reprimands and notes to the parents brought no results with Jack.

Jack's father gave much thought to the problem of his son, who was really intelligent enough, even though a failure in school. Particularly he thought of Jack's weakest point, his geography. Finally he hit upon an idea he thought worth trying. On his first holiday he took Jack on a railroad journey of some hundred miles or more through interesting country, giving Jack the seat next the window. The boy was intently alive to every phase of life, every town through which they passed, asking most intelligent questions and eagerly absorbing every bit of information given him.

The father decided that so far his test was promising; and the next free two hours he had, he played railroad with the boy's toy engine and tracks, which had pleased Jack

when they were a fresh gift but which had become forgotten and meaningless junk to him. The father laid out the track over an imaginary territory identical with that covered on their recent holiday, and every detail was made identical — the towns, flag stations, danger signals, tunnels, bridges. The toy engine made the trip again and again, a large-scale map beside father and son, and Jack eagerly pointed out this town, and that green valley and that winding river. He remembered them all. This was no longer geography; these were real places on a real earth, — all brought into reality by the magic of a railroad that connected them. Later the father laid the track over longer and longer imaginary trips, always with large-scale maps before them, until finally they had crossed the continent in every direction.

Geography was no longer to Jack just stupid pages in a stupid book. It was life, everywhere interesting. Following up this method, the father introduced intelligent games and miniature outfits for stimulating

Jack's interest in other school subjects. Today there are no more bad reports from Jack's teachers, and the change has been wholly due to the father's realization of the potential educational value of interesting games. Jack had a concrete mind; it could not be made to function until stimulated by concrete objects or experiences.

Other parents with stupid Jacks, or stupid Jills, may find the same method efficacious. There are good games and toys for teaching the rudiments of almost every subject. The parents' problem is to choose the really good ones from among those that are merely pretentious and meretricious; and very frankly this is a problem which the parents can solve only by giving real care and thought to the child's needs and to the possibilities of various toys and games.

From the moment the little child realizes that he has fingers and he begins to take an interest in them, we know that the child's power of observation and his ability to do things are beginning to grow. From that

moment play becomes a dominating factor in the child's life. From that moment on we can begin to make play the most constructive and joy-giving contribution in the child's development.

To those who might judge me of taking the life of the infant too seriously or accuse me of trying to overburden him or deprive him of innocent, joyous play and so cheat him and his parents of their happiness, I wish to state that my very purpose is to show how to enrich happiness by removing all obstacles which dam the growing energy of the little child, strain his nervous system, and suppress and repress his emotions. I recognize the physical care as the very foundation of the child's health; but if it is our aim to develop an all-around healthy child, we must, at the time we are taking care of his body, also take care of his mind and of his spirit; and this we can best do through play.

At the age of six months, and with some children younger, we can begin consciously to help him through play. At that time there

will be several hours during the day when the little child will be awake. He should be allowed to remain in his crib or in his carriage in a quiet place, the mother sitting out of his sight. Across his crib, a soft, colored worsted ball should be suspended on a ribbon, within easy reach of the little child's hands. The swinging of the ball will attract his attention, and the little child will begin to make an effort with his hands to get hold of the ball. The baby will clutch the ball, let go of it, and will repeat this act again and again. In following the action of the ball he at once begins to develop his power of observation; in catching the ball and letting go of it he gets his first lesson in muscular control, and the pleasure which comes from this unconscious achievement brings satisfaction to his emotional life. This apparently insignificant play at once begins to establish the habit in the little child of self-dependence, the very corner-stone of his future life's happiness.

From the child's earliest days it should be the business of parents to supply the child

with materials to meet and fit his developing powers. As soon as the little child is able to sit up, a wooden egg might be given him. The egg should be of wood, smoothly finished, of a solid color, red or blue, and it should open in halves. The mother, taking the egg in her left hand, opens it with her right hand, and as she opens it she says, "Open," and as she deliberately puts it together she says, "Close." She repeats the game very slowly, directly following each act with "Open," "Close," "Open," "Close," and hands the egg to the little child. Before many days the ten tiny fingers will very slowly but successfully open and close the egg. In doing this the little child has a lesson in concentration and muscular coördination. The variety that this game brings to him in form, in color, will hold his interest, and he will play with this game by himself for a half hour or more; the satisfaction he gets from the outlets of his growing powers brings to him happiness and repose. Peace to the little child is as essential

as food to conserve his delicately organized nervous system, which is so often overstimulated by holding him, shaking him, dancing with him, — all in the name of our love and devotion for him.

At the age of about eighteen months the child can begin to learn primary colors by introducing so simple a game as the large peg-board and pegs. You lay the peg-board in front of the child where he is sitting on the floor. In a red box of red cardboard, made by the mother if necessary, you have six red pegs. At the risk of repetition I wish to emphasize here again the importance of not overburdening the child with quantity. The mother takes one red peg. The mother says, " Red, " and puts the peg into a hole in the peg-board. She takes another peg and says, " Red, " and puts it into another hole in the board. She repeats this procedure until the six pegs are in the board, then quietly takes each peg out. By that time the little child will be eager to try it for himself. In a few days he will have mastered the game.

The color blue might be introduced for variety, but without mentioning its name. No new color should be introduced until the little child has perfectly learned the color red and is able to recognize it in different materials, — red beads, red paper, red ribbon. Within six months the little child will have learned the colors and will be ready to make combinations in various materials.

Parquet blocks, each side of the block a primary color, lend themselves to the making of simple and effective designs.

The Mosaic Designer holds great possibilities for a child between the ages of two and twelve. The little child can build concentric circles in solid colors — red, blue, yellow; and the more skilful hands of the older child can design baskets or make outlines of various animals. Both these are splendid material for cultivating the child's originality and give him excellent training in color combinations. Colored shoestrings and wooden beads are also splendid materials to use to cultivate the child's power of concentration,

especially if the child has an objective in view, such as making a string of beads for a doll.

One of the most educative pleasure-giving materials, and one most responsive to the child's imagination and stimulating to his initiative, is plasticene or clay. In using this material the child should be provided with either a piece of oilcloth or a piece of glass for his work-table and himself be put into overalls or apron. The young child, with a small piece of this material in his hand, rolling it between his palms, has a ball. When he puts a finger in the ball he has a bowl. With another piece of plasticene rolled into a ball and pressed between his two palms he has a plate for his bowl. His skill increases with his practice and by placing simple objects before him he will soon learn to express his observations through the plasticene. The same power of observation and skill he can put to use with the help of crayon, papers, blunt scissors, paper fasteners and paste.

The child who has been brought up in an

environment where these new riches in play have been recognized and invested in the child's welfare will show the result in almost every action of her life. For example, five-year-old Mary, on the day that she learned the family was getting ready to leave for the country in the spring, presented to her mother the following list of things she wished to take along, the items being set down in her hand-printing:

THE DOLL KAREG
(*the doll carriage*)
A FU BOOKS
(*a few books*)
AND MY TOPS
AND MY MOYSIK BOOKS TOO
(*and my music books too*)
THE TRISIKOL
(*the tricycle*)
AND TADE
(*and teddy*)
AND BONE
(*and bunny*)
BI AND BI I WONT SOM

MODOL FOR WOOD
(*by and by I want some model for wood*)
AND SOM SEDS
(*and some seeds*)
AND A WOTOR KAN
(*and a water can*)
AND MY BANK
AND THIS IS OL
(*and this is all*)

Perhaps nothing can better illustrate the variety of interests, the resourcefulness and the absolute self-reliance of this little girl of five than the foregoing list. On examining it, you at once find that here is a little child who is not in the slightest degree different from the ordinary little girl of five; dolls and doll carriages, teddy and bunny are as precious to her as they are to all little children of that age. But beside these, which are common to all children, Mary has worlds of interests which are closed and undiscovered to many other little children because we parents in ignorance withhold the riches that

toys and games contain for the development of the little child.

Mary, from her earliest years, through the use of toys and games, has been helped to develop skill in the use of her hands. Hammer, nails, scissors she uses as rightful helpers for her own self-expression. She makes boxes, tables and chairs out of wood, and she uses other materials with skill for fruitful purposes. Mary has splendid physical control of her body, using with joy her pushmobile, her skates, her jumping-rope. She has a genuine love for all living things. From her earliest years it has been made clear to her that flowers, like little children, are alive and need care and thought; and whether it is a square foot of ground in the country or a flower pot in the city, Mary always has her garden and is responsible for the care of it.

"A few books." Mary loves her books for the same reason that all children love books, for their pictures; and Mary loves her books for their stories because of her keen

interest and rich imagination which have been awakened and quickened through play. She builds worlds of her own with crayon and pencils, scissors, paper fasteners and paste, while the stories are being read to her. "And my music books, too." Music games, dancing and singing have been a part of everyday life with Mary from the time she began to walk. Her bank holds pennies given to her on special occasions, which makes her independent to buy an occasional surprise, — a flower for her mother's, father's or brother's birthday. All these riches in life are Mary's, not because she was pushed and forced or overstimulated or overexcited, but merely because the legitimate channels of interest and pleasure which play holds for every child have always been open to her.

With all the emphasis I place on using play as a medium for cultivating the child's powers and stimulating an interest in him to create and make his own toy things, I do not wish to give the impression that I do not recognize the necessity and the value of in-

troducing into his life from time to time and in small quantities ready-made toys from the outside. But in buying games for a child, it must be remembered that nothing less than the *best* of its kind is good enough for a child. We must remember that the little child is most impressionable, most imitative, and the perfect and the beautiful thing inspires him, as it inspires us adults, to take better care of it and have a deeper appreciation for it.

Children's toys must be made of good materials, whatever the character of the material is. They must be well-made; they must be reasonably durable; they must be in good taste as to color, and if they are objects supposed to represent real life, they must be as nearly true to life as possible. In buying toys for a child, they must be selected with a view to fit that child's particular physical and mental powers. The doting grandfather who presents his beloved two-year-old grandson with a two-hundred-dollar miniature yacht too precious to be used is guilty of a

criminal waste; so in another degree is the thoughtless mother who brings home a dollar's worth of squeaky, flimsy things which hardly survive their unpacking.

Perhaps no greater sin is committed against childhood than the supplying to children, both by manufacturers and by parents, of trashy play materials, — the kind that perish at the first touch. Just such materials are responsible for establishing confusion in the child's mind and creating destructive habits. In the little child's judgment, it must be remembered, his world of play is not separated very definitely from the real world he lives in. If his toy chair and toy automobile break easily and become useless to him, it is natural for him to look upon the furnishings about him as likewise temporary, and he is apt to grow careless and destructive in the handling of them.

The manufacture of toys and playthings is a very considerable national business. At Christmas time there is usually one hundred

million dollars' worth of playthings upon the shop counters of the country. Much of that is rubbish. But the bettering of the toy and game market is almost entirely in the hands of us parents. Toys, games and play materials of the present are a great improvement, from the standpoint of the new riches I have discussed, over those of a few years ago. If we parents, when we buy, demand better-made and more meaningful toys, the manufacturers will automatically respond. There is as much profit in manufacturing a good plaything as a senseless plaything; and besides, most manufacturers, if the profit be equal (and this is reducing the matter to the most sordid basis), would prefer making good toys to poor ones. So it is strictly up to us parents.

If we demand better playthings — if we select the meaningful articles already on the market — if we study our child's nature and learn its play needs — and if we recognize the full possibilities of toys and games —

then indeed we can honestly and joyously feel that we have opened that vast mine which contains in incalculable quantity the new riches of play.

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